

THE
Almost Christian
DISCOVERED,
In some SERMONS on
Acts 26. 28.
With a
Blow at Profaneness.

By the R. R. *Ezekiel Hopkins*,
late Lord Bishop of *London-*
Derry.

To which is added,
The Upright **CHRISTIAN**
DISCOVERED:
Gathered out of the judicious Trea-
tises of *William Bates*, D. D.

L O N D O N,
Printed for *Dorman Newman* at the
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Jonathan Robinson at the *Golden*
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and *Tho. Cockeril* at the *Three Legs*
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Th.
8^o. Z. 264.



TO THE
READER.

THE Excellent Preacher of these Sermons, was one that *sought out acceptable Words*; not to tickle the Fancy, but to affect the Consciences, in order to better the Hearts and Lives of his Auditors. He was a Person truly great and good; well known, not only in the Kingdom of *Ireland* (where he shined in a higher Orb) but in this of *England* also, especially in the two Renowned Cities (not only for Trade, but Religion) of *London* and *Exeter*, where Multitudes sate under his Ministry with great Delight and Profit. I need

To the Reader.

not trouble my self or the Reader to make solemn Protestations, or to insert Certificates under the Hands of several Persons concerning the Authentickness of these Sermons: All those that have heard him, or have read his other excellent and useful Treatises (a large Account of which, is here annexed) will easily be convinced by the Spirituality of the Matter, and Beauty of the Stile, that these are the genuine Offspring of Bishop *Hopkins*.

That these Discourses may be so bless'd to all that shall read them, that they may be not only *Almost*, but *Altogether Christians*, is the hearty Prayer of the Publisher.

A
CATALOGUE
OF THE

Works of Bishop *Hopkins* already Published.

THE *Vanity of the World*; in several Sermons, from *Eccles. 1. 2. Vanity of Vanities, saith the Preacher; Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity.* To which is added Two other Sermons; one at the Funeral of the Honourable *Algernon Grevil Esq;* from *Eccles. 9. 5. For the Living know that they shall die.* The other, on the 30th. of *January*, from *St. Peter, 1 Pet. 2. 13. 14. Submit your selves to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's sake whether it be to the King as supream, or unto Governours, as unto them*

A Catalogue of Books.

who are sent by him, for the punishment of
evil doers, and the praise of them that do well
In *Ottavo*.

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tures, *Vol. I.* Containing these following
Subjects ;

*The Folly of Sinners in making a mock
of Sin ; from Prov. 14. 19. Fools make
a mock at Sin.*

*The Resurrection of Jesus Christ ; De-
monstrated from Acts 2. 24. Whom God hath
raised up, having loosed the pains of Death,
because it was not possible that he should be
holden of it.*

*True Happiness ; from Rev. 22. 14. Blef-
sed are they that do his Commandments, that
they may have right to the Tree of Life, and
may enter in through the Gates into the
City.*

*Brotherly Admonition ; from Lev. 19.
17. Thou shalt not hate thy Brother in thy
heart ; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy
Neighbour, and not suffer Sin upon him.*

The

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The Dreadfulness of God's Wrath against Sinners; Demonstrated from Heb. 10. 30, 31. For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompence, saith the Lord: And again the Lord shall judge his People. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. In Octavo.

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An Exposition on the Lord's Prayer, with a Catechistical Explication thereof, by way of Question and Answer for the instructing of Youth: To which is added, A Discourse upon Providence; from St. Mat. 10. 29, 30. Are not two Sparrows sold for a farthing, and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father? But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. As also,

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so, A Discourse demonstrating the excellent Advantages of reading and studying the Holy Scriptures; from Col. 3. 16. *Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all Wisdom.* In Quarto.

A Second Volume of Discourses or Sermons on several Scriptures; containing these following Subjects, viz. *A Discourse on Man's Mortality*; from Heb. 9. 27. *It is appointed unto Men once to die, and after this the Judgment.* *The great Evil and Danger of little Sins*; from St. Matth. 5. 19. *Whosoever therefore shall break any one of these least Commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven.* *Of Abstaining from the Appearance of Evil*, from 1 Thes. 5. 22. *Abstain from all appearance of evil.*

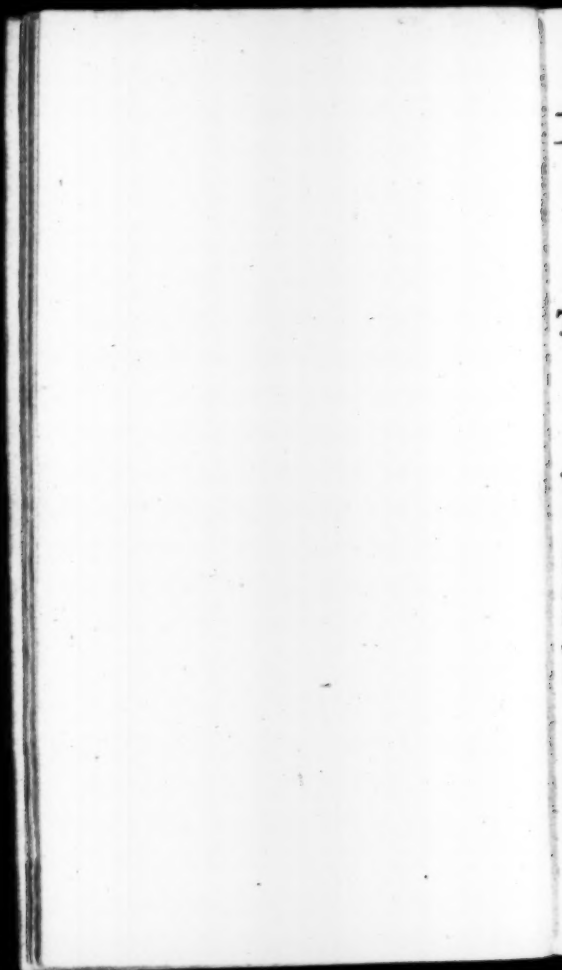
The Nature, Danger, Aggravations and Cure of presumptuous Sinning, with the difference between Restraining and sanctifying Grace; from Presumptuous Sins; from Psal. 19. 13. *Keep back thy Servant from presumptuous Sins, let them not have dominion over me.*

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Of Pardon and Forgiveness of Sin ; from
Isaiah 43. 25. I, even I am he that blottereth
out thy Transgressions for my own sake, and
will not remember thy Sins. In Octavo.

Several other Discourses of this
Reverend Bishop's are de-
signed shortly to be Printed.

THE



 S E R M O N I.

ACTS 26. 28.

Then Agrippa said unto Paul
ALMOST thou persuadest
 me to be a *CHRISTIAN*.

IN this Chapter we have St. Paul in his Fetters pleading before that Honourable Sessions of *Festus* and *Agrippa*; his Plea we have largely set down from the 1st. to the 24th. Verse, in which he opens his Commission, that he had received in an extraordinary manner from Heaven, for preaching of that Doctrine which was every where spoken against, and for worshipping God in that way which was called Heresie. I shall not at all enter into the consideration of the Apology; but let us look only at the different Effects that it wrought upon the
 B Hearer s:.

Hearers : *Festus* and *Agrippa* they were both of them Unbelievers, the one an unbelieving *Heathen*, the other an unbelieving *Jew*, and thus they both continued yet *St. Paul's* Speech works very different upon them. In the 24th. Verse you have *Festus* raving; he said with a loud voice *Paul, thou art besides thy self, much learning hath made thee mad.* Thy Thoughts of Vision and an Apparition, of a Man dead and buried, lying safe under ground that he should rise again and appear from Heaven to thee, being the Saviour of the World, is a meer Fancy, proceeding from a strong Phrenzy: Thus he scoffs and raves. But this very Sermon which seemed Madness and an idle Tale to unbelieving *Festus*, carries a strong Conviction in it to *Agrippa*, who was an Unbeliever too; *Almost thou persuadest me to be Christian.*

Hence observe *That the Word of God has a far different effect, even upon those, upon whom it hath no saving effect; one raves and rageth against it, is scared and stupified by it; another is convinced and terrified by it.* *Festus* he scoffs and mocks, goes away laughing at the Doctrine, and reviling the Preacher: But *Agrippa* is convinced

vinced, and half persuaded, to believe and practise that very Doctrine, and highly to esteem the Preacher of it. And is it not so even among us? Are there not many who may come to the Ordinances in a natural and sinful Estate and Condition, the same Word of God is cast among them all; yea, but what is the Success? The *Sword of the Spirit* when it is *brandished* amongst a great Croud of Consciences, it is not likely that it should miss all, and strike none of them; one perhaps goes away slighting and contemning; another goes away scoffing and railing against it; and another half-persuaded by it to become a Christian, to be almost a Christian. If every Man's Breast had a Casement in it by which we might see the inward Estuations and Boilings of their Hearts, how they work after a powerful and terrifying Sermon; should we not behold and see some shifting, and shuffling their Sins out of the way; some holding up the Bucklers of prejudicate Opinions, to ward and fence off the stroke of the Spirit; some fretting and storming at the lancing of their Consciences; some scorning and scoffing with *Festus*, that it is no better than Folly and Madnes; some

B 2 trembling

trembling with *Felix*; some convinced and wrought upon as *Agrippa* to faint resolutions, and half purposes; and yet all these remain under the Power of Unbelief and Unregeneracy. It is indeed a wonder among such diversity of Operations that the Word hath upon the Souls and Consciences of Men, it could be possible that such a multitude should go away without any saving Operation by it; some blinded and hardened, some terrified, some stupified; some exasperated and enraged; some convinced and half-persuaded, and such are those that we now speak of: Such as are, as it were, half of one Complexion, and half of another, that stick in the New Birth, whose Hearts have been warmed with good Motions; who have entertained approving and admiring Thoughts concerning the ways of Holiness, who have taken up some resolutions of doing better, and of being better; and yet do not come off roundly and speedily from their Sins, nor close fully with Christ. These are the half-Christians which the Text speaks of.

The Words they are plain in themselves; and therefore do not require
much

much Explication. Only the Word translated *Almost* thou persuadest me, &c. if accurately rendered according to the Original, it is *a little* thou persuadest me, &c. So in the Reply St. Paul makes with a holy kind of Gallantry in the ensuing Verse you find there it is opposed to *much*, which we render *altogether*; but the Grammatical Construction is, Would to God they were both *all and in much* such as I am except these Bonds. So then *in a little* thou persuadest me; that is, I could methinks be contented to be a Christian *in a little*, in some few things; some part of the Way I could willingly go, saith Agrippa: But St. Paul concludes, it must not be only in a little, but in much, in all. If we follow this Sence and Interpretation of the Words; then observe,

Doct. 1. *There goes much to the making of a true Christian, a little will not serve.*

It is not a little will serve; for many precious Ingredients go to the making of a true Christian; and much of each Ingredient goes to the making of a strong Christian. There must be Profession,
B 3. Faith,

Faith, Obedience, Self-denial, Patience, Humility, outward Preparation and inward Graces, outward Imbellishments and inward Ornaments, and a little of it is but little worth. There are many that are persuaded to be Christians in Name and Profession, to be Christians in outward participation of Ordinances and Communion with Saints and the like; yea, but this is to be a Christian but only in a little. Are you persuaded to obey Christ in all, to take up his Cross, and deny your selves, to oppose and mortifie your Lusts, and to perform the hardest and severest part of Religion: This is indeed to be a Christian not only in a little but in much; yea, in all, to be such as St. *Paul* himself was. But then if you take the *Words* according to our Translation, which the Original also will very well bear. So it is within a little or *almost* thou persuadest me; for King *Agrippa* was fully convinced of the Truth of those things which *Paul* related, as you may see, *v.* 26. He knew these things, and was ignorant of none of them, they were not hidden from him; for these things were not done in a corner. He could not be ignorant of the miraculous Conversion of him, who
had

had been so furious and notorious a Persecutor of Christians: He, who was expert in all the Customs that were among the *Jews*, ver. 3. could not be ignorant of what the Apostle affirms, ver. 22, 23. This that *Moses* and the Prophets foretold that Christ should suffer and be raised from the dead, and should give life to the *Gentiles*: Of all this King *Agrippa* was fully convinced; and yet when *Paul* so insinuatingly presseth upon him, *Believest thou the Prophets? I know thou believest.* The result of all is this, That he was but almost persuaded, not fully persuaded of the Truth of what *St. Paul* speaks concerning Christ, concerning himself, and concerning Christians; yet for all that he was but *almost persuaded* to be a Christian. Hence likewise observe,

Doct. 2. *That Persons who are fully and truly convinced, are many times but almost and half-persuaded.*

There may be a powerful persuasion in the Judgment and the Conscience concerning Christ and his ways, when there is but half a persuasion in the Will and Affections to close with him. These Observations

servations I gather up as they lie strewed in my passage. I shall not insist upon them but only as they are subservient to the fuller Prosecution of the General Doctrine, which you may take thus.

Doct. 3. *That those who never were in CHRIST; yet may be almost Christians.*

I need not here stand to tell you, that Christianity may be taken either,

First, For an *outward Profession* of Christ, as it is opposed to all other Religions in the World, whether *Heathenish Idolatry*, *Mahometan Stupidity*, or *Jewish Ceremony*: Or,

Secondly, For an *inward and cordial embracing of Jesus Christ*, thus professed, as it stands opposed, either to the *Prophaneness* or *Hypocrisie* of carnal Gospellers.

Evident it is, that the Christianity that *Agrippa* was almost persuaded into, was of the first sort, not excluding the second. Nay, it was seldom seen that in those *Primitive Times*, wherein no carnal Respect or outward Advantage could commend

commend the Gospel to the Interests of Men. When the reward of professing Christ was Persecution and Martyrdom; then I say it was seldom seen that any would take Christ by Profession, who would not also take him by Faith and Adherence. Few there were that would take up Religion, even upon this Condition, to lay down their Lives for Christ, who yet through their own Profaneness or Hypocrisie, were to receive no Benefit from the Death of Christ. So that to persuade Men then to be Christians in Profession, it was the same with persuading them to be Christians in reality. "But
"now when the Name of Christ is so much
"courted, when the denying of Christ
"would be repaid with the same punishment, that formerly the owning of
"Christ underwent, you need not so
"much persuasion to take upon you the
"outward Profession of Christianity. For you are not only *almost*, but *altogether* Christians in the external Garb; but our persuasion to you, must be, that as you own Christ in an outward Profession of him, so that you would cleave to him by a true Faith in him, and Obedience to him.

We are not then to speak to *Pagans*, to convert them to a new Religion ; but (if I may so say) we are to speak to *Christian* Infidels, to convert them to a new Life and Conversation. Nor yet among these doth my Subject lead me to the profane and looser sort, whose being called Christians doth not more honour them, than they disgrace and reproach that holy Name ; but to those who are more elevated, and more refined, who go far in Christianity so as to be near the Kingdom of God. In a word, such as are *Almost Christians*, and yet are Strangers to Christ, and remain in their sinful State and unregenerate Condition.

Now in the Prosecution of this Point, I shall enquire into these following Particulars in this Method.

1. What *Progress* Men may make towards Christianity, and yet fall short of it.
2. Whence they are enabled to proceed so far, and what it is that carries them out to all their Attainments.
3. What

3. What it is that hinders them from proceeding further; and when they are *almost* Christians, what keeps them from being such *altogether*?
4. To shew you the folly and misery of those who proceed thus far only, as to be almost Christians, and no farther.

First, Let us see *what Progress a natural Man may make towards Grace* and Christianity, and yet remain in a sinful state. Before I can come in particular to determine this, I must premise these two or three Particulars:

First, That when we enquire what Progress an unregenerate man may make towards Grace, this supposes that there is a tendency in what such a man doth, or may do towards the obtaining of Grace. Or how else can he make any progress towards it, if that which he doth hath no tendency to it? Let us therefore enquire what kind of tendency this is. There may be a two-fold tendency supposed in the Actions of an unregenerate man, towards the acquisition of Grace.

1. Effective,

1. Effective,

2. Subjective,

} Tendency.

I. Actions may be said to have an *effective tendency*, when they do by their own efficiency and causality produce that which they tend to; and in this sense it must be denied that the Actions of an unregenerate man, have any tendency towards Grace, be their progress what it will; thereby he cannot efficiently produce or cause Grace in himself; and therefore Grace is called the new Creature, as being the effect only of creating Power, which is the sole Prerogative of God, and it is as utterly impossible for a Man to create Grace in the Soul, as to create the Soul itself. Take but this one demonstration to evince it: If an unregenerate Man by his own Power and Efficiency can produce Grace in himself, then one of these two gross Absurdities must needs follow, either, 1. that there are still left holy Habits and Principles in the Will, which were never lost by the Fall of Man: Or, 2. That a Man may make himself truly holy by a Will that is totally corrupt and sinful; but either of these are very gross.

First,

First, There are no holy nor divine Habits left in the *Will* of a *carnal man*, whereby he should be able to regenerate, and convert himself; for what holy Habit can there be in the Will of one that is wholly corrupted? if any such be supposed, it may also be supposed that it is true Grace; and to affirm that a Man in a state of Nature hath true Grace inherent in him, whereby he is able to convert and regenerate himself, is double non-sence and a flat contradiction; for it is to affirm that he hath Grace before he hath it.

Secondly, A Will totally corrupted, cannot make an holy Man, cannot produce Grace, nor make a Man holy, Grace is beyond and above its Sphere, all the motions of the Will in its fallen Estate, what through defect of a right Principle from whence they flow, and a right *end* to which they tend, they are all evil and sinful. And it is very strange to affirm that a gracious Habit may be wrought in us by sinful Actions. And besides the Will of a Man by the Fall, it is a fleshly Will; but in Regeneration it is made spiritual. Now it were a strange kind of Production, if fleshly could beget spiritual; nor would it

it any longer hold true what our Saviour saith in *John* 3. 35. *That which is born of the flesh, is flesh*: So that I think 'tis very evident, that all that a Man can do by the power of Nature cannot tend efficiently to produce Grace in him.

Secondly, There is a *subjective tendency* towards Grace; and this lies in those moral preparations, and those dispositions of the heart which fit it for the receiving of Grace, though it be wrought there only by the Holy Ghost. And thus we affirm that while Men are in an unregenerate state, they may have and do somewhat that hath a tendency in it to Grace; that is, one unregenerate Man may have more of these previous dispositions, and of these preparations for the receiving of Grace, than another hath: For though it be not in it self singly necessary that such *previous* dispositions should be wrought in the Soul before the implantation of divine Grace; since such a Subject as the Soul is in respect of Grace, doth not, as the Schoolmen determine, require its previous dispositions for the production of its Form; yet this is the usual common way of the Spirit's work,

1. To prepare the heart by some common Works of Conviction, legal Terrors

Terrors, and remorse of Conscience, first to prepare the heart by these before it works any saving and real work of Grace in it: And therefore when any unregenerate man hath much of these previous preparations, we say that he goes *very* far towards Grace, and he may be said to be *almost a Christian*. And this is all that tendency that an unregenerate Man hath, or can possibly do towards it; viz. a preparatory, and not an effective operative tendency unto saving Grace and Regeneration.

2. Another thing premised is this, That what through wilful sloth and *wretched negligence*, no unregenerate Man doth make so great a progress towards Grace as he is able and can possibly do. None go so far as they can do in those previous preparations and dispositions towards it. When they find difficulty in opposing Temptation, in crucifying their Lusts, in performing of Duties, in denying their sinful Delights and Pleasures, having nothing supernatural within them to naturalize and facilitate these things, and carry them on resolutely through all, they never keep up to the utmost of that Power which they have; but as they yield to those
Temptations

Temptations that they might resist, and commit those Sins that they might reject, and neglect those Duties which for Matter and Substance of them they might perform; so none of them goes so far as they have a natural power to do: No Man goes so far in the work of Grace as he might, if he would improve that power which he hath by Nature.

3. Did they make as great a progress towards Grace as they might, they would not fall so far short of Grace as they do. I say if a wicked unregenerate Man did but as much as he is able by the power of *Nature* to do, without the special Assistance of the Holy Ghost, they would not fall so far short of Grace as they do. I would not enter into that Dispute whether God be engaged to bestow Grace upon the right Improvement of their natural power; yet it is certain, and agreed on by all, that he doth certainly do so. God usually bestows true and saving Grace upon those who do rightly, and to their utmost, improve their natural power and ability for their acquiring of it. If God be not obliged by promise to assist them; yet through his Goodness and Mercy he is not
wont

wont to desert them. Let them but labour to improve their natural ability to the utmost strain and pitch that their own capacity can elevate, God will (according to his usual method and wonted Goodness) come in by supernatural Grace, and enable them to do that which by Nature they are not able to do; for no instance can be given to the contrary. So then we may conclude that wicked Men never go so far as they can; and did they, yet they could not efficiently work Grace in themselves, but nevertheless they would be disposed and prepared for the receipt of Grace, which God upon such preparations would undoubtedly bestow upon them. For although he be not obliged to give it them, yet usually he is wont to work it in them meerly through his own natural Goodness, free Grace and Mercy to them, pitying the weakness of their lapsed and fallen Nature.

I shall proceed to the Answer of the first Question in the general. 1. Unregenerate Men may make a great progress, and may go very far towards Grace, and yet fall short of it; that in general is to be *Almost a Christian*. This I laid down in the Method propounded to you. Although

though I say not they go as far as they can by the power of Nature, and yet fall short of Grace; for that can never be instanced in any; yet the sad and wretched Apostacy of those who have been eminent Professors, shining, yea, and glaring Lights, exceeding, and also despising common attainments of others; their Apostacy hath too evidently confirmed it to us, that Men may go very far towards Grace, and yet fall short of it. See what Christ saith *Mark. 12. 24.* of that young Man, that forward young Man, *Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God*; that is, thou art not far from Grace; for so the Kingdom of God is oftentimes taken in Scripture for the Kingdom of Grace, so that we may say of such Men, they were not far from the Kingdom of God, not far from Grace, not far from Heaven, climbing up almost thither, within view and ken of it, having one foot, as it were, upon the Threshold of the Heavenly Gate; and yet even these tumble headlong, and never rest until they have plunged themselves to the bottom of Hell. It is with such Men as it is with the Vapours that are drawn up into the Air, they shine with the same Light, with the same apparent

rent Magnitude as the fixed Stars themselves do, and we may think them moving in the very same Sphere with them; but when we see them dart down to the Earth, and spilling all that Light and Glory, which they glistered with by the way, and fall into a filthy Jelly, thicker and more loathsome Substance than when they were first exhaled, we then conclude that all that Elevation of those false and blazing Lights, was vastly short of that Heaven in which they seemed sometime to be fixed. So is it with many unregenerate Men; you cannot tell with what they are fraught till you see them shipwrecked; then it is a sign, that though they were never right and true Treasure, yet they are something very like it: When we see them tumbling down off a glorious Profession through fatal Precipices of great, gross, and desperate Sins, we may sadly conclude that that Man was not far from the Kingdom of God, though he was never yet there. Indeed every unregenerate Man, when he winds up himself to the highest pitch and strain, he may be said to be far from the Kingdom of God, in respect of his total deprivation of Grace; though his Actions
be

be never so fair and specious, yet they are very far from being gracious, as far as *Darkness* is from Light; yet he may be said not to be far from the Kingdom of God likewise in a four-fold respect.

First, In that he is far from that which is furthest from Grace; and that is, gross, flagitious, and notorious Sins, which are farthest off from Grace of all others; and these a natural Man may be very far and free from; and therefore not far from Grace.

Secondly, He may have that which very much resembles and counterfeits Grace, so that as to outward appearance there is but very little Dissimilitude discernable between them. Now that which is like another, may be said not to be far from that which it is like.

Thirdly, He may be said not to be far from Grace, because (as I told you before) in the ordinary Works of the Spirit upon his Soul, he may have those preparations and dispositions laid in them, which usually are previous and antecedent to Grace, because these are wrought usually

usually before Grace; and therefore the person that hath these wrought upon him may be said not to be far from Grace.

Fourthly, He may be said not to be far from Grace, because if he did proceed but a little farther, he would possibly attain to true Grace. Had such but improved their natural power to such a degree farther, God would have come in with power supernatural, and have wrought that true and saving Principle in their lives, which would have been sure to have brought them to eternal Life. Grace indeed hath such a kind of dependance upon that which is *natural*; and that dependance is not so much of *Causality*, as of Order and Consequence, which though it be not necessary, yet it is commonly granted on all Hands. Thus then in the general I have shewn you that unregenerate Men may go far, yea very far towards. A Man may be *Almost* a Christian, and yet be out of Christ; be near the Kingdom of Heaven, and yet not in it; and, possibly, be for ever excluded and shut out of it.

S E R M O N II.

2. **I** shall proceed to the next thing propounded. As we have seen in the general, so now let us consider in particular what *Progress* a natural Man may make towards *Grace*; and that I shall do, by considering the several steps and degrees by which they may arise up to a great height and glory of outward Profession: And this we cannot better do, than by shewing, 1. What *Grace* is. 2. What resemblance that which is wrought by a meer carnal Man may carry in it like true *Grace*; by comparing these together, we may see how near an unregenerate, carnal Man may come to true and saving *Grace*.

First, What *Grace* is. I need not tell you that I speak not now of an *Objective Grace* inherent in God; but terminated on us, whereby a change is wrought in our relation to him. And this *Objective Grace* is nothing else but the divine Love, Favour, and good Will of God expressed

in us. But I speak of a *Subjective Grace* inherent in us ; whereby a real change is made in our Lives and Natures. And in brief you may take this Description of subjective or inherent Grace: It is a supernatural Habit immediately infused into the Soul by the *Holy Ghost*, residing in every Power and Faculty of the Soul as a Principle of holy and spiritual Operation. And there is a five-fold change wrought by it.

1. Upon *the Judgment, or the direct Understanding*, by informing and enlightening it.
2. Upon *the Conscience* in the reflex Understanding, by awakening and pacifying it.
3. Upon *the Affections*, by spiritualizing them.
4. Upon *the Will*, by converting it.
5. Upon *the Life and Conversation*, by reforming it.

This

This five-fold change is wrought upon the whole Soul by true and sanctifying Grace.

Now in the next place I shall shew how far a natural Man may attain to these, so as to be *Almost a Christian*.

First, As for his Mind or *Understanding*, he may be irradiated with a clear and sparkling knowledge of divine and spiritual Objects, when yet the Soul is not truly converted to God. It is true as in the *Creation* of the World, the Light is numbered and reckoned amongst the first of God's Works : So likewise in this new *Creation*, the first work of the Spirit of God is to shed abroad his heavenly Light in the *Understanding*; and therefore we have this first in order, in that Commission which our Saviour Jesus Christ gives to St. Paul, *Acts* 26. 18. He sent him to the *Gentiles*, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light; and then it follows, from the power of Satan to God. But yet notwithstanding, there is an Illumination about spiritual Things, which may gladden and beautify the Understanding of a natural Man, who like a Toad may be full of

of Poison, though he hath a precious Stone in his Head. The Apostle, he lays down this as one of those Attainments that an unregenerate Man may have, and yet be an Apostate, *Heb. 6. 4.* he may not only have a deep knowledge of Gospel-Mysteries, so as to see the whole Compages and concatenation of the Doctrine of Christ, and to unfold them to others; but may have also particular discoveries of the Glory and Beauty that there is in these things. We may see it clearly by *Balaam's Ecstasie, Numb. 24.* Such discoveries carnal hearts may have made to them, and see their Lustre and Beauty. Nay further, a carnal Man may be convinced, that there is no other way of Recovery but by the Grace of God through the Merits of Christ, and of the suitability of Christ to his Soul, of the Freeness of God's Love, of the Riches of his Grace, of the Readiness of his Heart to receive them; of the Desirableness of Happiness, of the Beauty of Holiness, and yet for all this remain in a natural State: But now, not to leave you under doubts and perplexities, such an *Illumination* of a carnal Man, falls far short of true Grace in these Two Particulars.

C

First,

First, In that it is but *Lumen sterile*, a barren light; Illumination that is saving, is not only Light, but influence too.

As the Light of the Sun doth not serve only to paint the World, and varnish over the Beauty and Variety of several Creatures that are in it; but carries in it a grateful heat and cherishing influence, which operates into them, and refresheth them; and as the Light discovers their Beauty, so these Influences increase it: So saving Illumination, not only illustrates the Soul by its Light; but likewise, by the Congenialness of its Influences, nourishes the Soul, draws Sap into it, and Fruit from it. Such is not the Illumination of an unregenerate Man; it is but a barren Light, and only serves to paint his Understanding, and hath no influence on it to make the Soul grow in Grace, and bring forth the Fruits of Holiness, to the Praise of God.

That Illumination that is saving is transforming, 2 Cor. 3. 18. *We all, as in a Glass, behold the Glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same Image, &c.* If a Beam of the Sun falls upon a Looking-Glass, it not only makes it glitter with a glorious Light,

Light, but it represents the very Image of the Sun in the Glass; but let it beat never so clearly and strongly upon a Mud-Wall, though it enlightens it, yet it doth not thereby leave its Image upon it. So truly Illumination, that is saving, doth not only irradiate, but transform. If you look upon the Sun, when shining in its strength, the Light thereof will imprint the very Shape and Image of the Sun upon your Eye; and look where you will, still you retain the appearance of the Sun before you: So every light that a true Christian hath of the Sun of Righteousness, will make as it were another Sun in his Soul. *But now the Illumination of wicked Men doth only enlighten, not change them; their Understandings may be irradiated with glorious Discoveries of God, Christ, and the Things of Heaven; but this doth not transform them into the Image and Likeness of those Things. The Illumination of godly Men and true Christians, is like the Light which breaks through the Air, and turns every vast Body throughout the World all into Light. It is with wicked, unregenerate Men, as with those that lie long in the Sun-shine; which though it inlightens them, yet doth*

but afterwards make them more black and swarthy. So thou may'st have as much notional Knowledge of God, Christ, and the Mysteries of the Gospel as any Child of God hath, and possibly much more, yet this is no true Sign of Grace; for this Knowledge is not therefore saving, because it is clear and comprehensive, but because it is influential and transforming. And usually we perceive that where the Light of Knowledge shines into a wicked Heart, it doth but *tann* and make the Person more black and swarthy, more sinful than before: Thus, as to the *direct Understanding* of the Judgment, a natural Man may have a bright, clear, and glittering Light concerning Heavenly and Spiritual Objects.

Secondly, As for the *Reflex Understanding* of the *Conscience*. Neither yet the Peace nor the Trouble of *Conscience*, is such an Attainment to which a natural Man cannot reach.

First, A natural Man may have a *quiet and peaceable Conscience*. Indeed when this Peace is true, it is always an effect of Grace; and therefore we thus find them
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coupled together, *Rom. 1. 7. 1 Cor. 1. 3.* Yet there is that which looks very like Peace of Conscience though it be not such, and that is a *supine* Presumption and a carnal Stupidity and Oscitancy: Their Consciences are never troubled at the sight of Sin, or sense of Wrath; but are like those presumptuous Sinners spoken of, *Dent. 29. 19. And it come to pass when he heareth the words of this Curse, that he bless himself in his Heart, saying, I shall have peace, tho I walk in the Imagination of mine Heart, &c.* Now this Peace is founded only upon bold and confident Persuasions of God's infinite Mercy, and gracious Disposition; and because God will exalt his Mercy above all his Name, therefore they conclude; that as God hath exalted his Power in creating and sustaining them, so he will much more exalt his *Mercy* in saving them. Thus as *Mad men* often fantasie themselves Kings or some great Personage, when indeed they are but wretched and miserable Spectacles, so do these spiritual Mad-men; and as the Devil appropriates to himself all the Glory of the Earth, so these look upon Heaven, and all the Glory of it, and boldly call it all their own; yea, and through their

wretched Security, are bold to cry out with *Thomas*, *My Lord, and my God*. To such I may say with our Saviour in another Case, *God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living*. God is not the God of such as love, and live in their Sins and Lusts; and that call him Father, whom yet they dishonour by a lewd and dissolute Life: This is but *Father one of the Devil's Off-spring upon the holy God*. Indeed Men by enormous and flagitious Crimes have so wounded and wasted their Consciences, that now they retain not strength enough to accuse, molest, and trouble them; and this they call Peace of Conscience: Such a Peace as *Gallienus* (in *Tacitus*) exprobrates the *Romans* with, when they have laid all waste. This they call Peace; but this Peace is rather *deadness of Conscience*, and is far from that which ariseth from the true Grace of God; and that that is the work of the Holy Ghost in Conviction, which destroys this ill-grounded Peace; and it works in the Soul Horrors and Terror, and affrights the secure Soul when it shew it how it slept upon the Top of the Mast, and lay on the very Brink of the Infernal Pit. As therefore we must not discourage
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a broken Spirit, but embolden it to appropriate Christ, and all the Promises of the Gospel to it self in particular; so we must let wicked Men know, that when they presume to call God, their God and their Father, and yet continue in their Sins and Wickedness, they will find that instead of being their Father, he will only be their Judge.

Now it will appear that this Peace of a carnal Man is only from deep Secularity, and the Spirit of Slumber that hath seized upon them; because when we come to examine the grounds of it, they plead only the goodness of their Hearts, and there is nothing more familiar and frequent than this they boast of; and though they live in a constant neglect of holy Duties, and wallow in the Filth of customary Sins, yet still they boast of this, that they have very good Hearts, upright Intentions. This is a meer delusion; for it is as utterly impossible that the Heart should be good when the Life is wicked and prophane, as for a good Root to bring forth evil and corrupt Fruit.

Secondly, As Peace of Conscience may be attained by natural Men, so many times

such may lie under the Regrets and Troubles of Conscience. It is not Trouble of Conscience that is the Attainment wherein true Grace doth consist: A dull and a lethargick Conscience that hath long lain under the customary Commission of gross Sins, may at length, by strong Convictions, be startled and awakened to a sense of Sin, and be affraid at the sight of it; but yet may retain an impure and defiled Conscience: God may (even in this Life) kindle in their Breasts some Sparks of the *unquenchable Fire*, and may give them some fore-tasts of that Cup of Trembling that they must for ever drink of. As he hath made himself a Devil incarnate by his Sin, so God may make his Conscience a Hell incarnate. By his Conscience you hear *Cain*, that Primitive Reprobate, crying out, my Punishment is greater than I can bear; nor could *Judas* find any other way to check his Conscience but with an Halter: These Regrets of Conscience may proceed from a preparatory work of Conviction, which because of Men's wilful deserting them, often vanish away without any saving effect; and fall as far short of true Grace, as the Region of the Air where Storms
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and Tempests, Thunderings and Lightnings are ingendered, falls short of the Heaven of the Blessed, and that Eternal calmness and serenity : And as Worms usually are the off-spring of corruption and putrefaction ; so this *never dying Worm*, that must ever sting them, oftentimes in this life, is bred out of a rotten and corrupted Conscience, the Conscience therefore may be defiled, when it is not seared ; it may be awakened, when it is not sanctified ; a filthy puddle may be stirred as well as a clear running stream, the Conscience may work terrors and horrors, where the Spirit of God never wrought true saving Grace.

Thirdly, As to the *Affections* : There may be Affections and sweet Motions of the Heart, which are oftentimes relied on as certain evidences of true Grace ; yet also may be in a carnal and natural *Man*, *Mat. 13. 20. Some received the word with joy, &c.* So *John. 5.* Christ tells the *Jews*, they did for a season rejoyce in the Doctrine and Preaching of *John the Baptist*. Thus *Herod* is said to hear *John* gladly, so that you see the Affections in holy Duties and Ordinances may be with joy, even

in those that have no true Grace at all in them. As there may be those affections of joy and delight, so likewise of sorrow for sin, so we have it 27. *Matth.* 3. It is said of *Judas*, he repented himself, and *Ahab's* humiliation was so great, that God takes special notice of him, 1 *Kings* 21. Behold, how *Ahab* humbleth himself, &c. How all these affections are but temporary and vanishing, which may be excited, even in carnal Men, from several advantages that things have to commend themselves, to their judgments and to their hearts.

First, Sometimes the very *novelty*, and the strangeness of them may affect them: *Novelty* usually breeds delight, which longer custom and acquaintance doth abate, and this may be given as a reason, why soon after conversion the new Converts affections are drawn forth more strongly in the ways of God, more than afterwards when they grow settled and stable Christians; the reason is, because of the very novelty of that course and way they have now entered into, which affects them with delight, besides the real desirableness which is in those ways themselves; the very novelty

velty doth affect them, and this too may satisfy us, that though many are turned aside from the truth as it is in Jesus Christ, and from the way of Worship which God hath appointed us, that have boasted, that they have found more comfort, and more sweet affections than ever, in those new ways after which they have gone; yet it is not because those ways have any thing in them, that might yield them more comfort and delight, but only because they are new ways, and all new things will for the present stir up the affections, but after some continuance in those ways, they find their joy and their delight to flag; then they seek out other new ways, and commend them as much; and no wonder, for new ways will stir up new affections; that may be one Reason, why affections may be stirred up, even in the unregenerate and meer carnal Men, as to the things of God, even from the meer novelty of them.

Secondly, Good affections may be stirred up in Men, from the very *affecting nature* of spiritual Objects themselves; for spiritual Objects may affect us in this natural way. Who can read *the History of Christ's*

Christ's Passion, without being affected with sorrow, for all the sorrow he underwent; he hath a heart harder than Rocks, that can hear of the Agonies, and Scourges, and cruel Indignities offered to so innocent and excellent a Person, as *Christ* was, that suffered even for Sinners, and not be moved thereby to grief and compassion; and yet possibly these affections may be no other than such as would be excited from us, at the reading of some Tragedy in a Romance or feigned Story.

Thirdly, Affections may be moved by the *Artificial Rhetorick* of others, by the great abilities of the Ministers whom we hear. God tells the Prophet *Ezekiel* Cap. 33. 32. *Thou art to them as a very lovely song*; they may sometimes have their judgments pleased, with the Learning shewn in a Sermon, and their affections excited by the Oratory, and powerful utterance of it; but these though they are very good helps to excite our affections, yet they are not true tests of spiritual affections in us.

Fourthly, Pride and self-seeking may in the performance of duties excite our affections.

affections. Men may be much deceived in this particular, for instance, in Prayer, they may think they are affected with the things they pray for, when possibly their affections may be moved only with the words themselves speak, with the copious, free and admirable inventive way that they pray in : Whereas the contrite broken Spirit, who is only moved with truly spiritual affections, may not be so large, and so copious in his expressions of them. A true Christian may *groan out a Prayer*, that cannot compose and make a Prayer, that hath a sententious Coherence one part with another. As the Ground that is fullest of *precious Mines* hath least grass growing upon it ; so sometimes in holy Duties, when the heart is most full of Grace, there may be least flourishing of expressions : You cannot gather the truth of saving Grace, from strong workings of the affections, which may sometimes upon these accounts be deceitful and wicked, and unregenerate Men may have Affections stirred up in them upon these grounds, but then they are always vanishing and fleeting, and are only permanent while the violence of some external cause doth excite them , and they are always unfruitful, though

though their affections may stir within them, yet they are not efficacious to put them upon a holy Life and Conversation.

S E R M O N III.

4. **E**Very change that is wrought upon the *Will*, is no certain evidence of the truth of Grace; a Man may fall short of true saving Grace, when there is yet a great change wrought upon the Will; it is true, it is the through change of the Will, wherein Grace doth principally consist; this is the first principal Act from the Spirit of Life, without which, whatsoever other change is wrought upon us, it is no more than to set the hand of the Watch to the right hour when the Spring is broken. The Philosophers call the *Will*, the commanding, swaying faculty of the Soul, that controuls all the Inferior faculties, and makes them obey its inclinations; so that such as the Will is, such is the whole Man: And therefore the Scripture in setting

ting forth the two-fold State of Men, doth it by shewing the temper of their Wills; unregenerate Men are described by their willfulness, *Ye will not come to me that ye might have Life, 2 John 4.* The People of God are described by their willingness, *Psal. 116. 3. They shall be a willing People in the Day of thy Power.* And here I shall endeavour two things,

First, To shew you after what manner the Spirit of God doth work this renewing change upon the Will.

Secondly, What other change is wrought upon it which falls short of true Grace, though oftentimes it is taken for it.

For the first, We must know that there are two ways, whereby God doth effectually change the Heart and Will of a Sinner: And these are *Moral Swasions*, and *Physical Determinations*, which is nothing else, but God's All-powerful Grace, whereby he doth immediately turn the bent and inclination of the Will towards himself, and both these do always concurr and accrue to this great change. He doth first convince

convince a Sinner, and perswade him of the rationality of the ways of God, of the vileness and emptiness of those vain things, which his desires so eagerly pursue : And on the other hand, he clearly represents the Glory and Excellency of himself and his ways, that he is the greatest good that we can enjoy ; and yet there is no other way to enjoy him, but by loving and serving of him : To do this he makes use of moral Swasions, and works upon our reason, by cogent and prevailing Arguments, which at last diffuseth such Heavenly sweetness through the heart of a Christian, which makes him disrelish those fulsome delights of sin, that separate from that infinite Good, with which it holds comparison, so that he finds more true delight in God and his ways, and more alluring and charming joy in them, than ever he did before in sensual pleasure ; more are thereby carryed forth unto them, by an infallible, yet altogether free, voluntary and amorous motion ; and this is done by the real efficiency likewise of the Spirit of God upon the Will, and this efficiency, is so sweetly attempered to the native Liberty of the Will, that it will be a pain and a torment to the Soul, to be separated
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ted from that God, whom now his understanding doth apprehend, and whom his Will doth clasp about, as the real and chiefest good. Here you see are both moral Swasions, and Physical Determinations, of the Will to the Work of Grace; God doth really determine it by the efficacious touch of his Grace, whereby he powerfully turns the bent and inclination of it to himself, which before stood towards sin and vanity; and that this might not infringe the Wills Prerogative of acting freely, he doth at the same time morally perswade it, by representing himself as the best and most satisfying object of it; notwithstanding the irresistableness of God's working upon the Will; yet still Man's Will is free in God's working of Grace, which some have thought to be an irreconcilable difference.

For the freedom of the Will doth not consist in redoubled pure Acts, for otherwise the Saints and Angels themselves, that are under that blessed necessity, that they cannot but love and serve God, would not love him and serve him freely: The liberty of the Will, consists in an acting upon rational grounds and motives, which
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by how much stronger they are, by so much more they turn the necessity of the Will to him, and yet by so much the more the Will is free in acting: So that here the liberty of the Will may not violate the causality of God's purpose, he changeth it by the power of his irresistible Grace. And yet that this irresistible Grace, may not violate the liberty of the Will, which is its natural privilege, he perswades it by such natural Arguments, that it could not act freely if it should dissent from them, though God useth infinite power, yet he useth no violence, he subdues the Will, but doth not compell it. This is that victorious Grace, that doth not more overcome a Sinner's resistance, than it doth his prejudice; it overcomes all opposition by its own irresistible Power, and overcomes all its prejudices by its attractive sweetness: And whenever it brings him to submit to God, it makes him to apprehend, that his chiefest happiness and joy is to do so. And it is the same that doth afterwards preserve a Christian from total Apostacy, for though there be such a constant supply of 'Grace to keep them, that they shall never draw back to Perdition; yet withal, their own freedom is such,

such, that they may if they will, but when the Will ceaseth its freedom, it never inclines but to that which is most pleasing, and nothing is pleasing to a renewed, sanctified Will, so much as that *Sovereign good*, which comprehends in it all other good. Thus you see, how God disposeth of the *Will* of Man, changing it without constraining of it, turning it not forcibly, but infallibly to himself, when he draws it by the sweet and efficacious operation of his Grace; Thus I have dispatched the first thing, and shewed how God works the renewing change upon the Will of a Sinner.

The second particular is to shew you, what other Change may be wrought upon the Will; which yet falls short of true Grace, and may bring a Man almost to Christianity, and yet leave him in a natural state and condition.

First, an unregenerate Man may have many faint velleities, and wishings, and wouldings after Grace; when he hears so much spoken of the *Beauty* and excellency of *Holiness*, he is convinced in his judgment that those things are true, that wish-
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out Holiness no Man shall see the Lord ; and that though while he is carnal, spiritual duties are tedious and a burthen to him ; yet were he spiritualized , they would become more delightful to him than those very pleasures of sin, which keep him from closing with Grace : Were he renewed those very pleasures of sin would become unfavoury to him, that which now he is afraid to lose if he would turn to Conscience he would not value the loss of it. When an unregenerate Man, I say, is thus convinced of this , it will make him to break out into *pangs of Affection* wishing for Grace. O that I were holy and gracious ! I wish my heart were changed and renewed : I wish I were better and could do better ; I appeal to every Man's Conscience, when he hath been convinced of the excellency and desirableness of holiness, whether they have not breathed forth such wishes as these are. When *you have* seen a Christian that is eminent and exemplary for piety ; have not you wished your selves in his condition, not only in respect of his future reward and glory, but also in respect of his present Grace. Have you not wished that such had been your comeliness and beauty, have you not wished

wished not only with *Balaam*, to die the death of the righteous, and that your last end might be like his; but also your Life by living righteously; and yet still continue in the same course and sinful state as formerly? Why now such empty Velocities, and idle Wishes an unregenerate man may possibly have; he may wish he were a Saint, even as a fond foolish man, according to his idle fancy, may wish that he were an Angel; but such wishes do not put them upon a constant attempt and use of the Means whereby they might become such, their wishes and their sighs vanish away together, the one retaining no longer an impression upon their hearts, than the other in the Air; he runs into the commission of that sin, which with his mouth he wishes he might not commit, and lives in the neglect of holy duties, and yet can wish that he had performed them; such contradictory wishes have unregenerate men; they wish themselves holy, and yet are wilfully sinful; they wish that they were better, and yet will not endeavour their own amendment.

Secondly, An unregenerate man, he may not rest in these Wishes, but he may
rise

rise to a *Resolution*; I say, to some degree of Resolution: They resolve many things; That their Lusts shall no longer enslave them; That the Pleasures of the World shall no longer bewitch them; That the Difficulties of Religion shall no longer affright them; but that they will break through all, and act like Men: And such generous and ingenuous Resolutions as these a man in his natural estate may fortifie himself with. Grace they know they must have, else they are eternally undone; they know that God hath not been wanting to their endeavours, and they peremptorily resolve that they will not be wanting to themselves. We may see the same strong resolutions of those that came to enquire of *Jeremy*, chap. 42. 5, 6. *They said, the Lord be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not according to all things for which the Lord thy God shall send thee to us, &c.* And yet none more rebellious and disobedient against God than these men that make this Remonstrance. And now notwithstanding these Wishes, and these Resolutions, the *Will* of a *Natural Man* falls short of a saving Change, and that usually in these Particulars.

First,

First, In that it is a *sickle* and *unconstant* Will; their Desires may be sometimes violent and passionate, as if they would take Heaven by force, and wrest Mercy out of the hands of God: their Prayers may be importunate and earnest, as if they would take no denial; but this violent Spirit is soon spent, and this full Bent of their Souls soon flaggs, and returns again, as formerly, ever and anon into the commission of some foul and gross Sins. Such a *Will* as this is, though at first it hurries them apace, yet it is soon tired, and leaves them short of Grace and Heaven. The Christian Race is not to be run by so many fits, but by a constant course and progress, still getting ground upon our Lusts, still approaching nearer to the Kingdom of Heaven: But it is with such men as it is with the Sea when a spring-tide covers all the shoar; when it ebbs, it discovers nothing but Sands, which before was nothing but deep Water; so these affected and flowing Christians, they discover that there is nothing but barren Sands at the bottom, that they are as *unstable as Water*. A Christian is not made in a Fit, neither is the Work of Grace wrought in a Passion; but it is a settled, solemn, and constant

stant frame of Heart that brings a man to Christ and Salvation.

Secondly, The *Will* of an unregenerate man is never universally changed ; still they reserve to themselves some Lust or other, that they will not part withall, and their Resolutions concerning their sins, are such as the Resolution of *Naaman the Assyrian*, 2 Kings 5. 18. *In this thing the Lord pardon thy Servant, that when my Master goes into the house of Rimmon, to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, &c. The Lord pardon thy Servant in this thing.* So men may be peremptory in their resolutions to forsake their Sins, yet still there may be some one dear Lust or other that makes them cry with *Naaman*, *Lord, pardon thy Servant in this thing.* Now they will be willing to receive Christ if they may be allowed in one Darling-Sin ; now the partition that any one Sin makes between Christ and the Soul, must needs hinder the soul from *closing with Christ* ; as, if you throw but any little thing between the branch and the stock that it is ingrafted into, the Sap will never be communicated to it, and so it will never grow up to be a Plant.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, The Will of an unregenerate Man is usually *irrational*; it would obtain the End, and yet not use the Means. Grace possibly they would have, but they cannot bring their averse Wills to close with the performance of those unpleasing & irksome Duties wherein God usually bestows Grace, and by which he conveys Grace to the Soul. Could they be holy with a wish, and a sudden fancy that inflames them, then none should be better Christians than themselves; could they enter into Heaven by being willing, there is none then should shine above them in Glory; but when there is so much hard and unpleasing work, first that they must be born of God, and after they are true Christians they must exercise every Grace, and perform every Duty that may fit and prepare them for Glory, they look upon these things as too difficult, which makes them sit down with idle Wishes short both of Grace and Glory; their *Wills* are very *irrational*; they would have Heaven, but they slight Grace, the way to it; and possibly they would have Grace, but they cannot bring themselves to the performance of those irksome and unpleasing Duties in and by which Grace is usually bestowed and conveyed.

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Fourthly,

Fourthly, The *Will* of an unregenerate Man is usually general, not a particular Will. If God should ask them, Sinner, what would you do to be saved? They would answer, Any thing, every thing. But let God bid them leave such and such a Sin, perform such and such a Duty, they answer with *Naaman*, Any Sin but that; any Duty but that. So it is with these Men; Oh any thing in the general; but when God brings them down to Particulars to do this or that, then they are willing to do just nothing.

Now I have shewed you how far the Will it self may be changed in unregenerate persons; they may wish after Grace, and resolve to be better, and to do better, and yet fall short of saving Grace; and also what it is that hinders this change from being a through work of Grace, what it is that obstructs them when they are *almost*, that they are not *altogether Christians*.

Fifthly, As for the *Life and Conversation*.

There may be a great change wrought in the Lives of unregenerate persons who,

who yet fall short of Christianity. The Apostle, *2 Pet. 2. 20.* speaks of such who *having escaped the pollutions of the world, through Lust were again entangled therein, and overcome, &c.* It seems to escape the pollutions of the world, is no Argument of true Grace, unless they be also cleansed from the pollutions of the Heart; for sin may be left merely from external and forced Principles, such as Terrors of Conscience for the heavy Judgments of God. When God sets up a flaming sword between a sinner and those sins which he accounts his Paradise here; now to leave sin upon such a strait as this is, is to leave it with a great deal of reluctancy; as when a Mariner in a storm casts his goods over-board into the sea, it is with his will indeed; but it is with an unwilling willingness; he is frightened and terrified to it: so when the soul is tossed with the Tempest of divine wrath, and when ready to be split upon the Rock of Ages, and sunk and be swallowed up in a Sea of Fire and Brimstone, he is forced to light himself, and to cast this and that dear Lust over-board; this he doth from his will; but it is such a forced will as that of Mariners, who throw their Treasure over-board, and as soon as

the Tempest is over, the one gathers up his floating wrecks, and the other his sins. These men leave their sins as *Lot's Wife* left *Sodom*; they dare no longer continue in it lest Fire and Brimstone rain upon them, and yet when they do leave them, they give many a wishly look back again, and have strong and vehement desires after them. That *Reformation of Life* that only frees us from debauchedness, that falls far short of true Christianity, and of making us *altogether Christians*; this is that with which many sooth up themselves when they they reflect back upon the wild extravagances of their former time, how outrageously wicked they have been, riotous, drunkards, unclean, blasphemers, and now they find themselves deadened to these sins, and grown men of staid and sober lives, they straightway conclude, Certainly this great change could never be made on them otherwise than by the renewing work of the Holy Ghost; and yet in this amendment there may be no work of Regeneration; for men may gather up their loose and dissolute Lives within some compass of Civility and Morality, and yet be utterly strangers to this Work. Much of this may be ascribed partly to convictions

victions of God's Spirit, awakening natural Conscience to see the horreur and danger of such daring and *outrageous* sins, and partly too from Prudence, gotten from frequent experience of manifold inconveniences that they brought upon themselves by such sins; and both these Convictions and moral Prudence are Principles that fall very far short of true Christianity. Usually all the specious Reformation and Amendment of these mens Lives, is in effect either a changing of the Sin, or a tiring out the Sinner.

First, *The Life* may seem to be reformed, when men exchange their rude and boisterous sins for such as are more demure and sober; from riotous, they grow worldly; from prophane and irreligious, they grow superstitious and hypocritical; from Atheists, they grow Hereticks; from sins of Practice, to sins of Contemplation: They are apt to think, certainly this change must needs be the change of their Nature, when indeed it is but the change of their sins; and usually it is such a change too, though it render the Life more inoffensive, yet it makes the Soul more incurable.

rable. *Austin*, in his 29th. Epistle, tells us, That Vices may give place, when Vertue or Grace do not take it.

Secondly, The *Life* may seem to be reformed, when men are only tired out ; when they have out-grown their sins. There are sins which are proper and peculiar to such a state and season of a man's Life, upon the alteration of which they vanish and disappear : Sins of Youth drop off from declining Age, as misbecoming them. Now this deceives men, when they look back to the Vanities which they have forsaken ; how deadned are they to those sinful ways which before they much delighted in ? They conclude certainly this great change must needs proceed from true Grace, when they do not leave their sins so much as their sins leave them, and drop off from them as rotten fruit from a Tree ; the faculties of their minds, and members of their bodies, which before were Instruments of sin and unrighteousness, are now become Instruments of Morality and seeming Vertues ; this sets them not free from the service of sin, but only restrains them from breaking out into notorious and scandalous Vices.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, *A civil and harmless demeanour* doth not render a man altogether a Christian; there be many ingenuous spirits, who lived blameless in the world, their good Natures nearly resembling Grace; and such was *Paul's* before his conversion: For he tells us, *As touching the Law, he was blameless*: So the young man that came to Christ to know what Lesson he had further to take out. This only argues a sweet Disposition, but not a gracious Heart. Thus you see how dissolute men may mistake themselves in this Work, upon which their eternal happiness depends. It is to be feared that many may rest upon these, and think the great discriminating change to be wrought, only because they are morally honest, or gained over to a profession of Truth, or to such a Party or Sect of Professors; when indeed true Christianity consists not in these things.

This shall suffice for the first General propounded; What Change may be wrought upon a man so as to bring him almost to Christianity, and yet leave him short of being a Christian: I shall close up this Branch with some *Practical Considerations*.

Use 1. What then shall become of such as fall short of those that fall short of Grace, that are not so much as *Almost Christians*? What will become of carnal, loose, and prophane Sinners? If those that have been gazed at and admired for burning and shining Lights, yet have fallen into the blackness of darkness, even into the Dungeon of eternal darkness, were we but serious in this Reflection, it would make all our faces gather blackness, and fill all our hearts with astonishment, to consider that we are not gone so far in Christianity as those may go, who yet fall short of Heaven. Have we all been *enlightened*? Have we all *tasted of the heavenly gift*, and of *the powers of the world to come*? Have we all been *made partakers of the Holy Ghost*? Are there not many among us possibly whose hearts have never yet been touched with the sense of sin, never affected with any of the ways of God, that give themselves up to all wickedness with greediness, who never have given so much as one serious wish towards Holiness, when those that seemed to shine as Stars in Heaven, shall be at last found burning in Hell; Oh, in what a dismal case shall these *Firebrands* be?

Use 2.

Use 2. Hence likewise, see what a difficult thing it is to be a true Christian. May a natural Man attain to all this that I have spoken of before? We may then take up that *same* Question, which the Disciples asked Christ, (when he had told them, that it was *as easie for a Camel to go through a needles Eye, as for a Rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*) Lord, *who then shall be saved?* What, may those whose profession hath been eminent, who have been *Sainted* in every Man's *Kalender*, may they at last miscarry and perish? Who then shall be saved? If such be not Christians, Christianity seems to be rather some fancied notion, than any thing real and attainable. To this we may make the same answer that Christ gave to the Disciples, *With Men indeed these things are impossible, but with God all things are possible*: It is impossible for Men by their own strength and natural ability to become Christians, but it is possible for God to make them Christians; It is possible as *Miracles* themselves are possible, only possible to the Almighty Power of God: There is not any Soul can be perswaded to be a Christian, but he hath a Miracle wrought upon him, and he himself must do that,

which is little less than a Miracle, he must act beyond the power of nature, and do more than a mere Man can do; therefore well may you suspect your Christianity, who find it so easie a matter to be a Christian. Even natural Men find it a difficult task to attain to that height and pitch, where they shine in moral vertues, though far short of Heaven, and it is easie for you to mount far higher than they, far beyond them; indeed it is an easie matter for any to make a slight formal profession, to run in a round of Hypocritical Duties, and live a moral civil Life, this is easie, there is nothing miraculous in this: But is it easie to pluck out the right Eye, and to cut off the right Hand? It is not easie to crucifie a darling Lust, *to cut off the right hand*, when it lifts up it self to plead for mercy, and to be spared a little longer, *to pluck out the right eye*, when it drops tears to beg compassion, and a little favor to be granted to it? Is it easie to combate with Principalities and Powers, to baffle Devils, and despise the scorns and affronts of the whole World? Is it easie to live like an Angel? Nay to live like Christ, to live like God himself? Is this easie, when we see so many tottering Professors aspiring
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towards Christianity, some mounting till they are giddy and brain-sick with their most damnable errors, others tumbling down from the Precipices of great and dangerous sins.

We may well wonder that any are saved, when such as these miscarry: Well then, to consider what it is that is wrought upon you, even that the Omnipotent God hath wrought, (and what it is that is wrought by you,) that that is beyond the Power of Nature : we may well conclude, what a difficult matter it is to become a true and serious Christian altogether.

Use 3. May natural Men go thus far in Christianity, O be you then perswaded to go much further ! Do not rest in any attainment short of Heaven and Glory. Rest not in any present attainment ; and this indeed is the most natural Use that can be made of this Subject, when you hear how great a progress wicked Men may make. I know that the hearts of the best Christians are ready to suggest to them, and they will be apt to conclude against themselves : All that is wrought upon them is but the common work of the Spirit ;

it; therefore their Graces are but Counterfeit, and that themselves yet are short of Christianity; I know that this subject may cause such jealousies and suspicions to arise in the hearts of some; but the genuine use of this Doctrine is not so much to pore upon our present condition, as to stir you up to make a future progress.

May a natural Man make so great a progress, as to be *almost* a Christian, then certainly I must never rest any where short of Heaven. Well therefore, the Apostle in *Heb. 6. 11, 12.* After he had shewn them at large what a height a natural Man may arrive to, he presseth them to be earnest in their endeavours after perfection. Why, this will be the best evidence to you, that you are *indeed Christians*, that you have the truth of Christianity.

Though *natural Men* may possibly *glisten* in a glorious Profession, and shine like the Sun in its radiant splendor; yet like it they have their Zenith, their highest degree, which when they have climbed to, they fall down again. But a true Christians course hath not any declension, he may proceed

proceed infinitely from one degree of Grace to another, he may ascend and reach higher and higher till he hath reached Heaven, where all his infirmities shall be swallowed up, and abolished in consummated Glory. And indeed this is the greatest evidence of the truth of Grace; a natural Man's motion to Heaven, it is *violent* and unnatural, it is forced from him, by some external impressions upon the Conscience, Illumination, and common Works of the Holy Ghost, which as soon as this external force is spent, he falls naturally back again to his former course of sin. *As a Stone may be carryed a great height towards Heaven, by an outward violent impression upon it, but when that force is worn off, it falls naturally back again to the earth.* Now a Christian mounts naturally to Heaven, which by reason of that dull mixture of Earth that is in him, his course tends to the Earth again; But the true Christian still mounts upward from the principle that carries him up, which indeed never totally spends it self; therefore if thou wouldst prove thy self to be not almost, but altogether a Christian, continue thy progress, still gain ground towards Heaven, rest not satisfied with any present attain-

attainments, but be still rising and soaring, until thou hast gotten the World and them too under thy feet.

Fifthly, When you see any who have been forward in a Profession, and gone far in Christianity, to forsake their *Station*, and fall back to their former course of Profaneness: Take heed that you do not reproach, that you do not scandalize Religion with their Apostacy; this is that which opens the mouths and hardens the hearts of wicked Men, when they see such Glorious, but yet Temporary Professors to return with the Dog to the Vomit; they indeed first bless themselves in their own ways, as being better than the ways of God, as being better than the Profession of Religion; otherwise why should those that so long have forsaken them, and with a great deal of pomp, made such a Glorious shew and Ostentation of Religion, and of Conscientiousness, why should such return back again to their old ways.

Secondly, It makes them think, that all Professors are but Hypocrites, that it is but a solemn cheat put upon the World, since such forward Professors of it are found
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forfakers of it. Some Men please themselves with a few idle conceits of Grace, and the New-birth Communion with God, and the like unintelligible notions, when there is no other difference between them and others, but what only their fancies make. O take heed therefore, that you do not blaspheme the ways of God, when you see the Apostacy of Professors: No, these Men were never in those ways. *Had they been Christians in deed, they would never have deserted those holy ways; their natures were never changed, and it is no wonder, that they are relapsed and fallen back again into their old Customs; to see the Swine that is cleansed to return back again to the mire, it is nothing strange. Had Christ changed the nature of these Swine, and made them his Sheep, then as they had first escaped the pollutions of the World, so they would have kept themselves from ever being intangled by them.* But this makes highly for the honour of Christianity, and proves it to be a thing so excellent, that it cannot be long counterfeited; Hypocrisie shall certainly betray it self by its Apostasie, that it had never any thing of true and saving Grace, although it carried far in a shew and pretence of it. Thus much for the first thing
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propounded, how far a Man may attain towards Christianity, and yet be in a natural sinful State.

S E R M O N I V.

THE next thing is to shew you, whence it is that natural Men are inabled to make so great a progress towards Christianity. I shall give you a brief Resolution to this Question, and that shall be drawn, First, from the consideration of the Subject, and that is a natural Man himself. Secondly, from the consideration of the Object, and that is Holiness or Christianity to which it tends. First, if you look in to the *Subject* the *natural Man* himself; And so you shall find that Man, and that which is wrought upon him, which may carry him out possibly to a very great progress in Religion, and that may be twofold. (1) the *Power of Nature*. (2) *The Elevation* and recruit which that power may receive from a common work of the Holy Ghost, much helping nature, quicken-

quickenings Conscience, and reforming the Life.

First, The Carnal Man may be carried very far towards Christianity, from the meer strength and power of Nature ; for the more power of corrupt nature ; is of it self sufficient to raise a Man to any attainment that is short of true saving Grace. A natural Man may so prepare and dispose his heart, as that the very next thing to be wrought upon him should be Grace ; It may carry him out to the externals of Christianity, and it may be with more pomp and grandure than sometimes the power of Grace doth carry out a Child of God. When the *Power of Nature* takes on it the form of *Godliness*, it will make bright and glittering Professors ; now these externals of Christianity they lie in two things, the *performance of Duties*, and the avoiding of Sin : As for Duties they may so far out-strip and out-shine a Child of God, in the pomp and gaudiness of them, as to be their emulation and example. And for sin there is not any one particular sin, setting aside those common and unavoidable infirmities, which are inseparable from the frailty of humane Nature ; but a carnal

nal Man may keep himself from the Commission of it, by the meer Power of *Nature*: And there is scarce any sin, that is branded remarkably in the World, but some wicked Man or other doth abstain from it, and that meerly from the Power of Nature; there are some that by this Power abstain from this Sin, another from that, and a third from another Sin: And each of these have Power to abstain likewise from all these Sins, because what Power the one hath, it may (possibly) be found in the other, since in nature there is nothing partial for a Man naturally is not so.

Secondly again, The Devil when he tempts, he doth not force and constrain them; he doth not forcibly move the *black Tongue of the Swearer* to curse and blaspheme, nor doth he scrue open the Drunkard's mouth by force, to pour down *intemperate Cups*, nor force the *Murderer's hand* to sheath his Sword in his Brother's Bowels whether he will or no, but he solicites the Wills, and insinuates into the Affections by his Temptations, and make these freely move the *Engine* to that which his design tends; and therefore

fore all his Triumphs are but for Beggarly Victories ; he could not prevail over us, did not we prove Traytors to our own Souls? did not we surrender up our selves, by the consent of our own Wills? else we could never be distressed, much less taken by the violence of the Tempter.

Secondly, As Men may proceed far toward Christianity by the Power of Nature, so they may have common and ordinary Works of the Holy Ghost upon them; that may carry them out to a very great progress, they may be made saith the Apostle, partakers of the Holy Ghost. *Heb. 6. 4.* and that is, of its common Gifts and Operations; it is the Spirit of God that inlightens their Understandings, that awakens their Consciences, that excites their Affections, it is the Spirit that works Conviction, that works Reformation; yea, and Sanctification, in wicked and unregenerate Men. For we have that expression concerning them: There is a twofold Sanctification, (1) Of the Flesh, consisting in the removal of all carnal and external filthiness, called by the Apostle an *escaping of the pollutions* of the World through lust, *2 Pet. 2. 20.* And that consists

sists in a separation from all those gross and vile Sins, wherein the flagitious and debauched World do wallow. (2) There is likewise a *Sanctification of the Spirit* consisting in a separation from a State of Nature to a State of Grace, the one is external by Reformation, the other is *internal* by *Renovation*; the former Sanctification a natural Man may be made partaker of by the Holy Ghost, so as to have his Life and Actions stand at a greater distance from, and a greater opposition to carnal gross Sins, which the World is generally defiled with, but this is no more than a common and ordinary Work of the Holy Ghost, they may account the blood, whereby they are sanctified an unholy thing: There is a far different force and energy, that the Holy Spirit puts forth, when it works Conversion, and when it works only outward Sanctification, in both it may work upon the heart, but in Conversion it works upon the heart so as to change it and renew it, but in the reformation of a natural Man, he works upon the heart indeed, but it is only to change and amend the life, the Spirit may perswade the one to change his heart, but then he changeth the heart of the other: He may perswade
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the Will of the one to submit to Christ, but then he subdues the Will of the other, he perswades the one to become a Christian, but he makes the other a Christian. Now there is a very wide difference between these two ways of working, by the one he only excites Men to use somewhat of the Power they have, but by the other he gives them the Power they want ; And thus you see, what there is in Man considered, both in nature and with the help of the common Work of the Holy Ghost, that may carry him so far towards Christianity.

Secondly, There is also something considerable in the *Object*, viz. *Religion and Christianity* it self, whence it is natural Men may make so great a progress towards it, and that is *twofold*, (1) *The Attractiveness of Religion.* (2) *The Subserviency of Religion to it self.* (1) *The Attractiveness of Religion*, and this consists not only in the inward and spiritual *beauty of Holiness*, which these Men have not Eyes to discern, but also in that happiness which is annexed to Religion and Christianity. This is that which draws out natural Men to all their Attainments, *Happiness* is the great bait of Men's desires,
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and that which sweetens the means tending to it, though they be in *themselves* very difficult and burdensome ; yet leading to happiness they close with it ; and therefore, as the apprehensions of Heaven and Hell work upon a natural Man, more or less, forcibly, than the thoughts of the difficulty or tediousness of holy Duties ; such is his progress, more or less, strong and vigorous towards Christianity. Secondly, Another thing in Christianity or Religion, that advanceth some to so great a progress, is the *Subserviency* of Religion to it self. Religion doth mightily promote and advance it self. (1) First, in that the performance of one part, and of one duty of Religion, it obligeth and engageth to the performance of another : As one Sin draws on another, by consequence likewise doth one Duty draw on another. There is a connexion and dependance between them, *Hearing* engageth to *Meditation* , and *Meditation* to *Prayer*, and Prayer for Grace to endeavour after it a glorious Profession, it obligeth to something at least that may be answerable to that Profession. Thus one Duty of Religion, it hands a Man over to another, and when he is passed through

through one, another stands ready to receive him.

Secondly, A little progress in Religion it doth facilitate, it is hard at first to begin, then having begun to continue, because use and custom in any thing makes it easie. How ! is this subserviency of Religion to it self, that may carry Men very far in it, when they have begun Profession, and entered upon one Duty, that Duty delivers them over to another, and makes it more facile and easie to them, because the precedent Duty as it doth engage him to, so it prepares him for the subsequent Duty, as well as engage him to the present Duty : One Duty doth as it were perform half the task, and bear half the burden of the other. Thus then you see, whence it is that natural Men may make so great a progress towards Christianity, so as to be *almost Christians*, from the Power of Nature, and from the attractiveness of Religion : Now here if you ask me, how shall I know, whether it be the Power of nature helped by the common workings of the Spirit, or the Power of supernatural Grace, that carries Men out to all their Profession ?

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I shall give you but this one *discriminating Character* of it: See whether your abilities be greater in the things that belong to Grace and Holiness, than they are to natural things. A Child of God who is but of weak parts as to the things of the World, that can scarce give you a rational account of such affairs, when propounded to him. Why; bring him but to the things of God, and how admirably will he be able to unfold, even the very *mysteries* that are hid from the wise and prudent of the World, but put him upon any common discourse, how broken and incoherent is he, but engage him in *Prayer*, how doth he *expatiate and enlarge*, and what a *Torrent of Divine Rhetorick* will he then pour into the *Bosom of God*; Is this from nature that he is able to exceed and go beyond himself? No certainly; It is very observable concerning the ways of God what the Prophet speaks, *Isa 53. 8. A high way shall be there, and it shall be called a way of holiness, the unclean shall not pass over it.*

Though they wander and err in every other way, though they do not take the right way to be rich, and great, and honourable

nourable in the World ; yet these that are fools in every thing else they shall not err from the way of Holiness, and therein lies the only Wisdom. But now take a meer carnal Man, that hath eminent abilities in earthly things ; usually, he is never weaker than when he is engaged in that which is holy and spiritual ; at least his chiefest excellency doth not lie there, though he doth perform the Duty well, yet he doth not do it beyond what he doth in ordinary and natural things. Now how is it with you ? Do you find your selves carried much beyond the rate and size of your natural abilities, that you never so much exceed your selves, nor do so well as when you are about some holy and spiritual employment, that you are not so artificial in any thing as in holy performances ; this is a good sign, that it is from the Power of Grace, and not only the Power of Nature, that carries you forth to the Profession of Religion you make. I take the extraordinary gifts bestowed upon unregenerate Men in a vast disproportion from their natural abilities, to be long ago ceased.

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Thus

Thus you see what inables a natural Man to go so far towards Christianity.

The third general propounded, was to shew what it is that hinders these proficients from making further progress, that when they are *Almost* what keeps them from being *altogether Christians*; I answer to this in general; It is only through a *willfull* and wretched *neglect* of what they might do, that any of them do fall short of Grace here, and Glory hereafter. It is not from our want of Power, but our want of *Will*, or rather indeed our willingness that makes us miscarry to our Eternal Perdition. I shall illustrate this by a plain and obvious Similitude: Suppose that God should promise to bestow Heaven upon us, if we would but reach forth and touch it with our hands: Now although we can never reach so high; yet if we do not stretch forth our hands, and reach as high as we are able to do, the fault of losing Heaven will not lie upon the inability and impossibility, that was in us to touch it, but it lies in our *willful neglect* of striving to our utmost to do what we are able to do; why, the reason why we fall short, would not be because our
Arm

Arm is not long enough, but because we do not stretch it forth to the utmost length.

The instance is somewhat plain and familiar, but yet it holds an exact proportion to the case in hand, God promiseth Heaven to us if we will but touch it, that is, if we will lay hold on Christ by Faith, which Faith we can no more work in our selves by our own proper efficiency, than touch Heaven with our Finger; yet howsoever, if we do not do our utmost, our falling short of Heaven and Faith cannot be imputed to the impossibility that we lay under, but to our willful sloth and neglect. It is not Men's *cannots* but their *will nots*, not their *Impotency* but their *Obstinacy*, that destroys them; *Ye will not come to me that ye might have life*, John 5. 40. *Ye will not.* Doth not Christ himself tell us, that no Man can come to him, except the Father draw him? True, but the fault lies in the stubbornness of your *wills*; though you could come, you would not; therefore it is not your weakness but your willfulness, that keeps you from coming to Christ. Let me here appeal to your selves; Doth not he deserve Eternal Death,

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who had a Power in his hand to make himself a Christian, and yet would not ; certainly you will all conclude, this Man is very equally and justly dealt with, if sentenced to Eternal Misery, since he had a Power to avoid that misery, and to lay hold on Eternal Life and Happiness ; his condemnation lies on his own head for his willful contempt of Salvation, which he had a Power to work out, and by a diligent improvement of the means tendered to him, to make sure of it ; every carnal Man if he had power to convert himself, yet through his willful neglect and obstinacy he would not do it ; and this appears, because there is not one of us that doth as much as he might do.

There is not one natural Man that doth as much as he might do : Will not he now do what he can do to prepare and dispose his heart for Grace, then much less would he work Grace in his heart, though he had a Power to do it ; and therefore the whole default of Men's falling short of Grace, lies in their willful neglects. Men indulge themselves in carnal sloth, and if they
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can but maintain the pace and rate of common ordinary Professors in a formal course of Duty, or abstain from gross Sins; O then they are contented! and will be drawn on no further. Could not they command their thoughts to dwell more fixedly, and more abidingly upon Spiritual Objects? Cannot they be oftener in Meditation, and meditate more fervently, and with more affection? In both had they not Power to refuse temptations and sinful motions? Doth the Devil use any force or violence upon them? Did they ever find, when they threw themselves upon their Knees in Prayer, that he stiffened them that they could not bend? or that the Devil stopped their mouths from speaking, or their hearts from thinking? had he a Power to strike Men lame when they should come to the Ordinances, or strike them deaf when they should hear, or Dumb when they should speak, then there were some shew and colour of reason, why Men attended no more frequently, why they heard no more attentively, why they did not ponder more considerately, why they prayed so seldom and heartlessly; did but the Devil

compel them to this, the Sinner might have some excuse ; but when he must wooe their consent and allowance , and wait their pleasure and leisure , it is merely a wretched neglect or willfulness, that they yield to the Commission of any Sin : Can you do all this and more, and yet will you not ? Know that if you perish, it is only your own fault, you your selves are the bloody Murders of your own Souls. It will be in vain for you to plead, that you had no Power to make your selves Christians ; why, you never went so far as to make a trial, whether you had a Power or no ; for a Man not to do the utmost that he might do towards Christianity, though he hath no Power to make himself a Christian ; yet it is the same as if he had a Power, and yet will not make use of it. O let this that I have said prevail with you, to be not only Almost, but altogether Christians, and to put forth all the power and might, and ability, that you have in the working out your own Salvation. Is there not infinite Reason, why you should speedily set about this important Work , while you have time and opportunity for the
doing

doing of it? Is it a matter of the greatest moment in the World, and not to be delayed one moment? Be persuaded then to the speedy practice of it.

Object. Some desperate Wretches may think indeed, that Arguments to persuade Men to work out their Salvation, may be of weighty import to inforce the Duty upon those that do expect Salvation; but for my part I pretend not so high; let me but enjoy now the Sins which I serve, and the pleasures which I pursue, and for the State of my Soul hereafter, I commend that to the mercy of God, and if I must perish, I will perish with as much ease and content as I may. It is hard to alter an irreversible doom, and if it be to Perdition, it is but folly to hang down the head, and blubber the eyes, and break the heart for that which cannot be altered. If I must go to Hell I may as soon be carried down thither in a flood of tears, as in doing ungodly Actions: Why should I conspire with God's Decree to make my self miserable. If he hath sentenced me to Hell hereafter, I

may as well sentence my self to an Heaven here ; my future torments are in his Hands, but my present delights are in my own ; therefore if Salvation and Happiness be such nice points I forego them, and will embrace my more easie and more obvious pleasures.

Answ. I know no pious heart here, but shivers with horror at such Language, though it be but personated ; methinks rather it represents the Speech of a Devil, who is without all possibility of Happiness, than of Men who are in the way to it. Indeed it is the Speech of the Devil, but it is likewise in the hearts of Men, when they storm and bluster at the difficulties of Salvation, and narrowness of the Way, and straitness of the Gate : The Devil interposeth this suggestion, It is as good to perish with ease, as to be saved with so much labour and pains ; but what, shall we leave Men to such desperate resolutions as these, and suffer them to go dreaming to Hell and Destruction ? Certainly Religion hath Arguments enough to prevail, even with these, if they would but shew themselves to be Men,
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and but ponder how much Reason can speak.

First consider, Thou that wilt rather perish than make thy Life a trouble to thee by Obedience, God may under thy Disobedience make thy Life a trouble, yea a Hell to thee by his Terroures. Thou thinkest that thy Garment of Sin and Pollution, will sit more loose and easie about thee, than the Garments of Holiness that are too strait-laced and troublesome : Yea, but what if God should roll these thy filthy Garments in Brimstone, and fire them about thee ? How dreadfully wouldst thou be disappointed, when instead of that ease which thou seekest in the service of Sin, God should make thee thine own Tormentor, and make thy Conscience an Hell incarnate ? Believe it, the wrath of God can fry the marrow in thy Bones, and reduce thy Soul to Ashes. Read *Psalms*. 88. and you will think it a doleful and sad description of the State of the Damned. While I suffer thy Terroures I am distracted : And if the Wrath of the Almighty lay thus sore upon an Holy Man, how fretting and corroding

will it be upon the leprous Soul, and upon an ulcerated Conscience ? If it burns up the Green Tree, what will become of the Dry Tree, which is but as prepared fuel for it to prey upon?

No Man hath his present delights and contentments in his own Power, because no Man hath his own Conscience in his own Power ; it will speak, yea, and that terrible things, even then, when a Sinner hath done all he can to fear and stupifie it. Consider again, how is it with you after the rage of your Sinning is over? are you not haunted with fearful reflections and ghastly thoughts of despair and horror? Could we but unbowel a Sinner, we should find those Conscience-Worms, gnawing and knotting about him, and devouring his heart. And are these wont to resolve into trouble, for fear Religion and Holiness should trouble them? Are they content to buy ease and quiet at such a rate, as the loss of Heaven and Eternal Torments amount to? And is this the ease and quiet that they purchase with it? The Devil puts a gross cheat upon these
Men,

Men, he changeth not the trouble but the time of it, only they shun the work of God, because it is troublesom in doing, though it doth leave behind it the blessed fruits of Peace, Joy, and Satisfaction; and they do engage in the Work of the Devil, which as soon as the heat and fury of it is a little over, leaves in their sober thoughts, nothing but Anguish, Stings, and Torments; and therefore be not deceived, suffer not the Devil any longer to abuse you, and impose his drudgery upon you, under the notion of ease and quiet: If your Consciences were once awakened, I know the Work of the Devil must needs bring you more vexation, besides the shame, than ever you would have from the work of God; yea, the very omission and neglect of God's Work is a far greater trouble than the performance of it would be; therefore if you look no farther than your present Content and Satisfaction, if you would go to your final estate the easiest way whatever it be, think not to attain this by giving up your selves to a way of Sin, nor by wounding your own Consciences, which with trouble afterwards
will

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will be sure to be avenged upon you, but in a way of Duty and laborious working, you only can find present content, and shall certainly find future Happiness?

S E R-

S E R M O N V.

Object. 2. **T**Rue, may some say, Possibly the Work of God might be more pleasing and satisfactory to us than the Work of the Devil, if we could work it ; but to what end is it that God requires from us to work, to what purpose doth he command us? Doth not he himself know that we have no power? Doth not he himself say that we are *dead in Trespasses and Sins*? Is it rational, is it just to bid a dead Man work? Or doth it become that God who would be thought by us to be infinitely gracious and merciful, to mock and deride humane misery, when he commands those things from us which he knows to be impossible? Had he bid us blend Light and Darkness together, or to bend the Axle-tree of the World till both Poles meet ; had he bid us fling the Stars out of their Orbs, or with our hands stop the Sun in the midst of his course ; all these great impossibilities are as easily atchiev'd, as by our own power to work any part of divine and acceptable obedience without gracious.

gracious assistance from God : We can as soon glorifie as sanctifie our selves. What should we then do, but only sit still and expect, till efficacious Grace should move and act us, and we not able to gainsay and resist it ? till God so draw us as that we must run, and so call us as that we must answer ? till then our Obedience is an impossibility, and all our Attempts are vain and fruitless. This now is a slothful Sinner's pretence why he will not work ; and no doubt but that too often it doth flash into the thoughts of most men, whereby their hearts are discouraged, and their hands weakened in the service of God.

Ans. In Answering this, I shall not enter into that great Debate of the power of nature to do what is good and acceptable to God ; but proceed in a plain and accommodated way to Practice, and that which will be most convictive to the Conscience.

First, Men will not plead thus in Matters of far less concernment than the Salvation of their Souls. Would a Master, when he commands his Servant to work, take this, think you, for a sufficient excuse,

cuse, That he hath no power to work till God act and move him? It may as well be objected by your Servants to you, as by you to God. Tell me, what power have I to speak, or you to hear one word, unless God do concur to it? Nay, we are not *sufficient to think one good thought*, 2 Cor. 3. 5. And do we make this an excuse to forbear those Actions that are necessary and convenient! Do we therefore resolve to do nothing, because it is impossible for us to do any thing unless God concurs with it? What stupid, dull Folly were this, and we put it daily and hourly to trial, and produce me that man that can say God was wanting to him in his concurrence. What a miserable and ridiculous task would it be, if in every Action of our Lives that we cannot do without God, yet should sit still, and question God's concurrence? Do you sit down to try whether God will enable you to rise when you are down? Or, do you question whether God will concur to another step, though it is impossible you should stir and move, unless God act and move you? yet this hinders not mens endeavours: *In him we live, and move, and have our being.* Why do not you do so in spiritual matters?

matters? We can do nothing without God. True; yet put it to the trial, whether or no God will concur with you. Certainly that man must be nameless that can say, I was truly willing, and endeavoured to do any spiritual good, but God was wanting to me in his concurrence.

Secondly, Those men who thus make *Impotence* a pretence for their Sloth, do not indeed believe what they themselves pretend. No, it is the inward and secret thought of them all, that they have a power to work out their own Salvation, and therefore whether they have or no, still they are inexcusable, while they think they have this power, yet they sit still. Although a man be chained fast down that he cannot go, yet he thinks himself at liberty, and notwithstanding sits still, you may soon tell where the fault lies; it may be imputed for want of Will, and not for want of Power: So here; Wicked men think they have power to work, however they speak otherwise; therefore they are utterly inexcusable if they do not work. It is as clear as the light, that their Sloth proceeds not from their Impotence, but from their own wilfulness. I shall endea-

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your by a few Arguments to convince you, that you do indeed think that you have power to work out your own Salvation; therefore if you do it not, you are altogether inexcusable, whether you have that power or no.

First, Did you never, when God hath shaken his Rod and Whip over you, seriously promise and resolve to work; his Rod, I mean, either of Conviction or Affliction? Have not these made you enter into an engagement with God, that you would serve and obey him for the future? Did you not really thus resolve? There are few here, but sometimes at least in a Fit and Pang of Conscience have so done. And why did you resolve all this, and yet at the same time think and believe you could do nothing? Did you only mock God, and play with your own Consciences? Certainly your Consciences then were too much provoked, and too much awakened to be thus jested and dallied with. We find this Temper in the *Israelites*, when they were frightened at the terrible glory from Mount *Sinai*, *Exod. 24. 3.* See how confidently they promise and resolve. *And all the People answered with one voice, and*
said,

said, *All the Words which the Lord hath said will we do.* So the Jews in their great distress, *Jer. 42. 6. Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God, &c. that it may be well with us.*

Alas, how many pious Purposes and holy Resolutions have your Dangers, your Fears, and your Sick-Beds been witness to? Have they not heard you breath out, *Spare, O Lord, spare a little longer; give some space; try us yet once more, and O Lord, we will reform, we will amend our sinful Lives, we will perform neglected Duties, and never more again return to folly?* Are not these Resolutions an evident Conviction? Certainly you thought you had a power so to do, and therefore if you do not endeavour to perform, you are altogether inexcusable.

Secondly, Did you never in your whole Lives perform a Duty unto God? Did you never pray? Is there any here so desperately prophane, so lost to all shew of goodness, that hath not done this? And to what end have you prayed? For what did you perform your Duty? Was it not
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for Salvation? And did you work for Salvation, and yet think you had no power to work for it? It is impossible; Mens very Works do plainly shew, that they do think that they have a power; something still must be done, though it be but formally, slightly, and coldly; a mere *Lord have mercy upon me*, a customary *Lord forgive me*; yet something Conscience will require which men reckon upon, and make account to be working out their Salvation.

Thirdly, Wherefore is it that you trust unto, and relie upon your good Works, if you think you have no *power* to work out your Salvation? Would it be so hard and difficult a matter to take men off from leaning so much upon their *Works*, if they did not think that they had power to work out their own Salvation? Men do apprehend a worth and sufficiency in what themselves do in order to Eternity, and bid them forgo their Works, and renounce their own Righteousness, and this is a hard Saying; you may almost perswade them as soon to renounce all their hopes of Heaven. This is an evident Conviction, whatever Notions men may entertain to stop
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the mouth of a clamorous Conscience, when it calls on them for working and labouring, yet they do not believe what they themselves speak concerning their Impotence.

Fourthly, Did you never when the Spirit of God was dealing with your Hearts, perswading you to enter upon a course of Duty and Obedience? Did you never procrastinate, and use delays? Did you never stifle the Breathings, nor quench the Motions of the Holy Spirit, by thinking it was time enough to do it hereafter? What need I begin so soon, or vex my flesh, or deny my self the Joys and Pleasures of this Life, even as soon as I am come to relish them? When Sicknes, or grey Hairs admonish me, and tell me, I am near unto Eternity; when old Age promiseth me that the Severities of Religion shall be no long trouble, then will I look after the Concernments of my Soul; then it will be time enough; then I will repent, believe, obey, and work out that Salvation that will be then hastening upon me. Tell me truly, Have not these been the foolish Reasonings of your Hearts? Have you not thus often promised God and your own Consciences? And doth not this plain-
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ly imply, you thought you had power to do it? *Wherefore thou art inexcusable, O Man, whoever thou art:* it is in vain to plead want of Power, God will confute thee by thy very thoughts. Hadst thou no Power? Although thou hadst not, yet thou thoughtest thou hadst, yet wouldest not endeavour to work; therefore thy Ruine is as wilful, and thy Condemnation as just as if thou hadst a power, and wouldest not work; for thou perishest merely thro' the default of thine own Will.

Ans^w. 3. Whether wicked men have this power or no to work out their own Salvation, I shall not now stand to enquire; but if they had it, yet they would not work with it; and therefore it is a most vain and insufficient *Plea* to pretend they wanted power. Now this appears evidently, because there is no wicked man, that ever did so much as he was able to do by the mere strength of Nature, without the assistance of supernatural Grace; and therefore it is not their Inability, but their wilfull Sloth that doth destroy them. Do but answer your own Consciences, Was there not one Duty more which you could have performed, nor one Temptation, nor one
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Corruption more which you could have resisted? Could not you have prayed, read, or meditated upon heavenly things, then when your Hearts and Thoughts have been vain, worldly, and sinful, and devilish? Might not that Time have been spent in holy Converse, which you trifled away in idle, impertinent Discourse, or in doing nothing, or that which was much worse than nothing? What force, what constraint is laid upon you? Can you think? And if you can, Cannot you think of God as well as of the World? as well concerning fulfilling God's Will, and working out your Salvation, as fulfilling your Lusts? Can you not speak? And if you can, Can you not speak to God in holy Prayer, and of the things of God in holy Discourse, as well as of your Trades and Bargains, those low and trivial Matters that are not worthy of Men, much less of Christians? What force is there upon you? Doth the Devil screw open the Drunkard's Mouth, and pour down his excessive and intemperate Cups whether he will or no? Doth the Devil violently move the Tongue of the Swearer and Blasphemer to revile the holy and *reverend* Name of God? Doth he strike men dumb when they should pray,
or

or deaf when they should hear, or senseless when they should understand? Is there any such force or constraint laid upon you? May you not avoid the one, and do the other if you your selves please? Yes, you can, but you will not; therefore neither would you work out your own Salvation if you could. Is there any hope that you that will not do the less that God requires from you, that you should ever be induced to perform the greater? Let your Weakness and *Impotence* be what it will, yet your Condemnation will lie upon you so long as your Willfulness is much greater than your Weakness. No, Sinners, your precious and immortal Souls will eternally perish now for want of Will to save them. Pity your selves; will you lose your selves for ever only out of Sloth? Will you sleep your selves into Hell, and go drowsily into destruction? Shall one end of your Souls lie already burning as a Brand of Hell-fire, and you not put forth a hand to snatch it out? Is it more painful to work the Works of God, than it is to perish for ever under insupportable Torments? Therefore do you what you possibly can, labour and sweat at Salvation, rather than fail of it: Let this never grate
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nor fret your Consciences in Hell, that they lie there burning for ever, merely for your wilfull Neglects.

S E R M O N VI.

VWhen a man is gone far towards Christianity, there are several things that make him neglect a further progress: As,

First, His groundless fancying of Difficulties and hard Encounters in the Ways of God. Oh, were it but as easie to be holy as sinful, he were wretched that would refuse to be a Christian; or were Christianity but one hard pull, or difficult pang, that would soon be over, there were some encouragement for them; but when they have already struggled, and wrestled, and waited against the stream, thus far, and yet see no end, Duty to be performed upon Duty, and Temptation upon Temptation to be resisted, still to be combating with Devils, still to be crossing
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and vexing of our selves, no respite, no breathing-time allowed them. This takes off their Wheels, and though they are able to do this, yet they will rather sit down quite short of Grace, than run thro' such hardships to attain it, and so they come up in the mid-way, neither holy, nor prophane; but please themselves with a mediocrity, and middle rank of Religion, and dare not go further for fear of difficulties; nor yet they dare not fall further back for fear of Conscience; and so they lie hovering between Heaven and Hell. Now this is merely from wilfull Sloth. *Prov. 26. 13. The slothful man saith there is a Lion in the way, a Lion in the streets.* Here the Wise Man brings in a drowsie Sluggard dreaming of dangers and difficulties, to excuse his Sloth; I dare not stir abroad, for there is a Lion in the streets: A likely matter that there should be a Lion in the streets; but yet see how this Fancy works with him: Any thing is an excuse for the Sluggard. In *ver. 14. As the door turneth upon the hinges, so doth the Slothful upon his Bed.* A Door is often in motion to and fro, but it gains no ground, makes no progress, still hangs where it did; so it is with slothful Professors;

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fessors; that which they have already attained to, is that they move to and fro like a door upon the hinges, still the same motion over and over again, no new progress, no new attainment, and that merely because they are sluggish and lazy, and fanſie difficulties to themselves, and strange apparitions in the Ways of God, that make them stand at a stay where they are, and dare not make one step forward. As it was with the *Israelites*, who came to the very Borders of the Land of *Canaan*, *Numb.* 13. 32, 33. When the Searchers had brought reports to them, that *the Land indeed was good and fruitful, but the Walls of the City were built up to heaven, and that there were many Giants; and that they should be beaten and eaten:* They were not so much allured with the goodness of the Land, as they were deterred by the thoughts of the difficulties; and though God himself bid them arise, and enter, and take possession, they would not venture upon so hazardous an exercise, and so difficult an enterprize: So there are many forward Professors who are come to the very Borders of the Land of *Canaan*, to the very entrance into the Kingdom of *Heaven*, who, when they see
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What strong holds of Iniquity they must cast down, what Principalities and Powers they must fight with, and what gigantick Lusts, as the Sons of *Anak*, they must subdue and destroy, this frights them from attempting any further.

Secondly, To be *almost a Christian*, carries in it those advantages and those accommodations, which, were they altogether such, they must lose; and therefore this is one Reason why so many stick in the New-birth: Such a one is no Saint, and therefore the men of the World embrace him; such an one is no prophane and scandalous person, and therefore the Children of God embrace him, and think well of him too; and thus he doth hold a correspondency with both of them; which were he altogether either, one or the other, he must break off; and therefore finding the conveniency of this neutral estate, he stops where he is, short of true Grace. Were he a prophane Wretch, then those that are truly godly would avoid his company; or were he truly godly, then the World would reject and scorn him; the godly esteem and love him, and from their ready Charity they look upon

him to be truly gracious. Those that are true Christians (thinks the almost Christian) look upon me as such as themselves, and what need I begin by a forward Zeal to disoblige the World? And the wicked and prophane respect me too, because I go a little before them (though not quite cross and contrary to them) and so I enjoy the good opinion of both sorts, which were I fully one or the other, I should hardly attain. This man can (as it were) hold Heaven with one hand, and yet hold the World with the other, not lose his interest in the one, and yet retain his interest in the other; he can enjoy the delights and pleasures of the one, and then hope for the rewards and happiness of the other. Were we lodged in a Star, then the Earth would appear very small, and almost nothing, as the Stars do now to us; so were we more above, the Earth would appear either as very small, or as nothing. Thus it is with a Child of God; he soars up by the wings of Faith and Love to the heavenly *Jerusalem*, and the Earth appears very inconsiderable to him; but now an unregenerate man, when he mounts highest, yet still will be sure to keep Earth in his eye; he will not lose the
fight

sight of that ; and therefore when he hath got to such a pitch that he is able to discover something of Heaven , and yet not lose the sight of Earth, there he hangs in *aquilíbrio*, and will be drawn no further ; he keeps something of the Earth in his eye, and will not lose nor diminish his sight or share of it for the Hopes and Joys of Heaven.

Thirdly , *False Opinions and Conceits* that they are already Christians, hinder these forward Professors from being true Christians. It may be they would be Christians indeed , did they not think they were already such. When men are gone far, then they are apt to think they are got home, and so they have taken up their rest, and will be driven on no further ; they think that what they have already gotten, is enough to bear their charges to Heaven, and so they grow careless of getting more ; they are perswaded that they are Christians, and that keeps them from being perswaded to be such. I do not intend to forbid eminent Professors to think they are indeed Christians ; but let them look how this perswasion works

with them: Doth it tend to make them more careless, negligent and remiss? When they have been under Troubles of Conscience for their Sins, then they saw themselves in a lost and undone condition, and had hot and scalding apprehensions of the Wrath of God; then they were laborious to frequent Duties, conscientious in their walking, and fearful lest they should sin; but since their Troubles have been worn off, they have entertained better Hopes, and better Opinions of their state. Are they not grown more loose and more regardless? They do not take so much pains with their hearts, nor are they so strict and holy, and severe in their Lives; I must tell such what the Apostle tells the *Galatians*, ch. 5. 7, 8. *Ye did run well; who hindered you? This perswasion cometh not of him that calleth you.* This perswasion that you are Christians, cometh not of him that calleth you; possibly it would be well with them if they did not think they were so. Sirs, if so be that thoughts of your being Christians, and in a state of Grace, did encourage you to walk worthy of that holy Calling; if the hopes of your good and holy estate, do engage you to purifie your

your selves as God is pure, as they will work if they be right and genuine, then still entertain and cherish them; but if they turn to loosness, remissness or presumption, here suspect them to be the overweening Conceits and Elevations of a carnal heart, and such as will certainly hinder you of what you thus fondly imagine your selves to be, hinder you from making further progress in the Ways of Christianity, in regard you take up false conceits that you are Christians already.

Fourthly, Another Ground whence it is that forward Professors many times fall short of true Christianity; It may be when they are already gotten far, then, the Devil especially doth all he can to hinder them; when they have gone far towards Grace and Christianity, then he unites all his Force and Subtilty to stop them from proceeding further, lest they get from under his power and jurisdiction; he knows if they once become Christians, they are then almost out of his reach; and therefore whatever lust be in the Soul,

he will then especially stir it up ; whatsoever reserve of Temptations there be, he will then send them upon the Soul : For none are more assaulted with Horrors and multiplied Temptations, than those who make a great progress towards the Ways of God, and are near to the Borders of true Christianity ; because then the Devil suspects that he shall lose them, and that they are even revolting from him. When they begin to move towards Heaven, and labour after true Grace and Holiness, the Devil sees that ordinary Temptations are not then sufficient to secure them ; that those Lusts that before hampered and captivated them at his pleasure, will not now so easily prevail ; for he finds them too resolute, too rough, and untractable to deal with ; he begins then to fear to what a Rebellion this may grow, and therefore he sets upon them with all his power, way-lays them with all Ambushments, circumvents them with all his Wiles and Stratagems ; and though these be only Armies and Musters of Shadows, which a man might break through without any danger, would he but arm himself with noble and undaunted Resolutions ; yet
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with these the Devil assaults and undermines them, and that incessantly, and doth at last stop them in their course towards Grace, if not beat them back again to their former course of Prophaneness. *Luke 11. 24, 25. When the unclean Spirit is gone out of a Man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and finding none, he saith, I will return to mine house whence I came out, and when he cometh he findeth it swept and garnished. V. 26. Then goeth he, and taketh seven other Spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there, and the last state of that Man is worse than the first, i. e. When men have cast out unclean, gross Lusts by an external Sanctification, that the Devil seems to be dislodged, when he seeks to return again to his ancient seat and possession, he finds the Heart swept and garnished; swept from the filth of common Sins, and garnished with common Graces, as its ornaments; so that there seems no re-admission or re-entrance of this unclean Spirit; and then he goes and takes to himself seven other Spirits worse than himself, that is, as I conceive, stronger Temptations, and more prevailing Lusts, and by them he enters, and*

dwells there, and defiles that clean-swept house, and not only keeps the Sinner from being better, but, makes his latter end worse than his beginning.

Fifthly, When Men have gone far towards Christianity, natural Conscience then leaves them, and ceaseth to excite and provoke them to a further proficiency. *Conscience* is the Spur that quickens wicked men to make that progress which they make. Now when it hath brought them past common Sins to known and common Duties, then it leaves them, and urgeth them no further, and so they sit down far short of true Grace and Christianity, which they endeavoured after. Well then, let me say to such men, as *St. Paul* to the *Galatians*, chap. 5. 7. *You did run well; who hindered you?* Was it the difficulty of Religion, or the strength of Temptation, the Flatteries and Allurements of the World, the Violence and Rage of your own Lusts? But might you not nevertheless have armed yourselves with peremptory Resolutions? Might you not undauntedly and victoriously have broke through all these? Were
you

you not able when you stood still, or when you gave back as frightened and terrified at these things, to make one step, and another step still forwards? Could you not proceed still further, and press onwards through all these? Yes, you might have gone much further if you would; you might have made a further progress, though all Hell had armed it self against you; therefore if you perish, there will be cause and reason to blame yourselves; you can only charge your damnation on your own wilfull sloth and negligence.

This may suffice for an Answer to the Third General; Whence it is that Professors that have gone far towards Christianity, yet fall short of Grace, and of being true Christians: They were too nice to encounter Difficulties; they were apt and forward to think well of themselves; they were too faint-hearted to cope with Temptations, loth to disoblige the World, and would not proceed further than spurred on by a natural Conscience, and therefore wilfully fell short through their own Sloth and Negligence.

ligence, of Grace here, and of Glory hereafter.

Fourthly, The last General propounded, was to shew you the Folly and extreme Misery of those who proceed thus far as to be *Almost Christians*, and yet will not be perswaded to be such *Altogether*. The Apostle seems to be very passionate, *Gal. 3. 1, 3. O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the Truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? &c. Verse 3. Are ye so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the Flesh? What are you mad? Are you besotted? Are you bewitched out of your common Reason and Understanding; that having begun in the Spirit, and made so far progress in the Ways and Knowledge of Christ, that after all this, you should fall back again to carnal, fleshly Rudiments? Why, the same may I say to many: You that are Professors, Why, who hath bewitched you? Why are you so foolish, as when you have not only begun, but proceeded far towards Holiness and true*

Grace,

Grace, that yet you should give over and sit down in a state of Nature and Unregeneracy short of it ; Consider but your folly and misery in these particulars.

First, consider, Is is not extreme folly, madness, and misery, willfully to fall short of that which you have already taken so much pains to attain ? What, after all the labour and hardships, and difficulties that you have already gone through to obtain Grace, now to sit down short of it, and lose all ? Will you willfully lose all your Prayers and all your Tears ? all your Convictions and all your Conflicts ? Shall all these be so much labour in vain ? Is not this much below the ingenuoufness of your Resolutions in inferior matters ? Do not you use to quicken your endeavours by such Arguments as these, I have spent so much upon it, I have taken so much pains about it, therefore I will see the end of it, and go through with it. Do you think much to lose your labour in any thing but Salvation, but in working out the Salvation of your precious Immortal Souls ? What though it be hard and difficult to go further :

ther: Consider, was it not hard and difficult to arrive at that which you have already attained unto; and are you so foolish as to be willing to lose the fruit and benefit of the difficulties you have already past, only for fear of difficulties that are yet to come? If Christianity be not worthy your pains, why did you ever engage in it? And if it be, why do you sit still? You will be guilty of extreme folly either in this or that. For you enter upon Christianity without sitting down, and reckoning what it will cost you; Christ himself there brands you for Fools, *Luk. 14. 28, 29.* *For which of you intending to build a Tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it, lest haply after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish it.*

If it was not worth your pains, what a folly was it to attempt it? if you thought it worth all and more, what a folly then was it to flag? And could you before you came so nigh to Grace, and
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so nigh to Glory, could you see that beauty, and that desirableness in it at so great a distance, as to perswade you to come thus far, and now when you are much nearer, and can see much more of its excellency and comeliness; Dare you now despise and contemn it? when you have not only the promise of God to be your encouragement, but you have also given earnest too for that Profession, and those endeavours, and those Duties which you have already passed through, they are all (as it were) the earnest of your further progress; this earnest you lose, Profession, Endeavours, and Duty, and all comes to nothing, if after all you rest any where short of Grace, you lose your earnest which you give, if you be but almost Christians, and rest any where short of true Christianity. Well, what extreme folly is this for Men to disquiet themselves in vain, and take so much pains to pray and hear, and to keep themselves from many Sins, and perform many Duties; and yet because they will do no more, they lose the Benefit of all this? Why, what is it that you do all this for? Is it not to obtain Grace and Glory? And will

will you do so much for such an excellent end, and yet willfully fall short of it? You may remain Graceless without all this Labour; if you are fully resolved for Hell, why do you do any thing? to Hell you may go without Praying or Hearing, without striving, or conflicting, or performing one Duty, or resisting one Sin as you do; if you are resolved for Heaven, why do you not do more, all your praying, hearing, striving, and wrestling, they will be lost and in vain, if you do not hold on, if you do not continue. Well, what a folly is it for you to have gone so far, and won every step of Ground by clear force, who have toiled in the ways of Religion, with sweat and anguish, and disquieting to your Soul, and yet at last to lose and frustrate all this pains through your cursed and willfull sloth and negligence; to give all away, and fall willfully short of Grace and Salvation?

Consider Secondly, Is it not gross and inexcusable folly to desist after so far progress, whereas for ought we know, had we but proceeded a little further, we might

might have obtained that Grace which we fall short of? And how know you, but that upon your further endeavours, God might have bestowed that Grace you strive for, God is not wanting in this kind; to those who improve the Power of nature which they have, he gives the Power of Grace which they have not; Yet when Men arrive thus far, and come as it were to the very Porch of *Heaven*, what thick and dull folly is it, when there is as it were but a step or two between them and Glory, to break off their Progress and sit down short? What is it more labour to go those few steps more you are to proceed to, than those which you have already gone.

Were you willing and contented to do all that you have already done for that which is but like Grace, and will you not be perswaded to do a little more for that which is true Grace? It may be God may convert you by the very next Prayer you make, he may convert you by the next Sermon you hear, he may give you true Grace, when you next of all oppose any Temptation, or when you next of all
struggle

struggle against any lust, the very next step you take in his way may carry you to Heaven for ought you know. Now the great probability of this, nay were it only a bare possibility, it makes a Man guilty of the greatest folly, who hath gone thus far towards Holiness to neglect a further progress towards it.

Thirdly Consider, What a dangerous and dreadful thing is it, for Men to climb so high, and yet to have no holdfast to depend upon, no foundation to support them ; yet thus it is with every elevated carnal Professor that falls short of Grace ; he is like a Man that stands upon the sharp top of a Towering Pinacle, where he hath no other hold-fast but a handful of Air : But the standing of a Child of God is firm, his feet are fixed upon an immovable Rock, even the Rock of Ages, and God reacheth out his hand from Heaven to support him. It is disputed by some nice Inquisitors, whether a Man if he were lift up above the Magnitude and attractive *Virtue* of the Earth, he may not stand as safely and walk in the Air as he doth now upon the Earth. It is true of a Child of God,

God, when he hath got beyond the reach of earthly Attractions, he may walk safely in that sublime way which leads to Heaven; but now for wicked Men, that have not got beyond the Malignity of the Earth, it is exceeding dangerous, their earthly Minds and Affections, and their earthly Conversations, will in the end bear them down headlong, unless they climb still higher, until they have got beyond these terrene Attractions.

Now would it not make you tremble, to see a Man born up in the Air, as the Poets feign of *Icarus*, with waxen Wings that are subject to melt and fall off, and betray their charge to certain ruin and perdition. Thus it is with every one that have gone far in Christianity; and is it not you that fly only with waxen Wings, I mean the Power of Nature, and the common Works of the Holy Ghost, which may fall off and leave you in Eternal ruin.

And from hence it follows in the fourth place, that these Mountainous Professors, who have attained to an high pitch, yet
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fall short of Grace, because they want firm footing to assure their standing ; they usually either desperately tumble headlong into the Commission of some foul gross Sins, or else they grow brain-sick, and turn aside to the maintaining of some prodigious error ; this is usually the Issue of such lofty Professors, as we see a Cloud that hath been sucked up by the Sun, how it hovers a while in the Air, but anon it is wrapp'd and whirl'd about with every Wind, and so it is utterly lost and dissipated, or else it falls down again to the Earth in Storms, and is turned only into mire and dirt ; Even so fares it with many a Professor, he is drawn up out of the Earth, and above the Pollutions of the World, by a common influence of the Holy Spirit, and for a while he hangs and hovers in a lofty Profession, but having no firm Basis to sustain him, he is either blown up by an empty Cloud, and driven away by every Wind of Doctrine, and lost amongst various Sects and Opinions ; or else after a while, he falls back again into the filthy conversation and worldly pollutions, that he had escaped and ends only in mire and dirt, and this because they have not that
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incorruptible seed within them that shall never die. Indeed true Grace is of it self Immortal, but it is from that engagement, that God hath laid upon himself to preserve it in those, who are diligent in the use of those means, by which it may be maintained. But now an unregenerate Man is left wholly to his own Power, to preserve him in that Station in which he shines: And if the Angels themselves and *Adam* fell from their first Estate, merely through the mutability of their own Will, who had power to continue in it, how much more certainly then will these carnal Professors fall from their high pitch, who have less Power to inable them to stand, and greater Power against them to cast them down: To aggravate the exceeding great Folly and Apostacy of these elevated break-neck Professors, see that most dreadful place, *2 Pet. 2. 21.* *For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.* Why, is not the Wrath of God certainly to be revealed against all those, who know not God, and obey not the Gospel of the Lord Jesus.

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118 *The Almost Christian.*

It is better never to have known the Gospel, and never to have gone a step in the ways of God, than afterwards willfully to desert them and apostatize from them.

First consider, The Fall and Apostacy of those who are great and eminent Professors, it carries much of malice and willfulness in it, which is the highest rank that can be in any Sin. If there be any in the World that commit the unpardonable Sin against the Holy Ghost, it must be these Men. There is indeed a great difference between sinning willingly and sinning willfully; Profane carnal Men they Sin willingly, but none but those who have been forward Professors in the ways of God, and have utterly deserted those ways; none but those can sin maliciously, and merely because they will provoke and offend God by their Sins; Now see what the Apostle saith of such, Heb. 10. 26. *For if we sin willfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more Sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, &c.* Heb. 6. 4, 5, 6. For it is impossible

possible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly Gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the Powers of the World to come, if they shall fall away to renew them again unto repentance, &c. This is the first aggravation of their Sin and Misery.

But then Secondly, When elevated and eminent Professors fall away they usually fall lower than they were before, when they took their first rise towards Christianity and true Religion; falling away from a Profession, is like the falling down from a steep Precipice, where they can have nothing to stop them till they come to the very bottom: And it is observed, that none prove more notoriously wicked, and more desperate haters and revilers of the ways of God, than Apostate Professors.

First, God doth judicially give them up to commit all manner of Sin with greediness; see that black *Catalogue* of the foulest Sins that can be imagined, *Rom. 1.* from 21. to 30. The Apostle speaks there concerning

cerning the Heathens, but the case is parallel with our carnal Professors, who do not like to retain God in their knowledge, therefore, *God gives them over to a reprobate mind to do those things that are not convenient, &c.*

The Devil takes possession of such Men with stronger power and force than ever ; (as the unclean spirit re-entred with seven Spirits worse than himself *Luk. 11. 24.*) to secure that Soul that hath been so likely to revolt from him, and therefore no wonder Christ saith, *the last estate of that man is worse than the first.* So that these eminent Professors when they fall away they usually fall lower than they ever were before their first rise and motion towards Religion.

Unregenerate Persons not only fall lower, but they seldom return to make a Profession of their deserted Religion ; it is impossible to renew such a one to repentance again. Now how should these sad and dreadful Considerations, make every one of us to do our utmost, that we are able to get true and saving Grace. If we
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rest any where short of it. When the Winds of Temptation tempestuously beat, and the Floods of Tryal, Affliction, or Persecution rush in upon us, we shall fall, because we have no Foundation, but have built merely upon the Sands. If you stand not built upon the corner Stone, you will fall of your selves, yea, that Stone will fall upon you, and crush and grind you to powder. Nay you fall off from a steep and slippery Precipice, where there is nothing at all to stop, nothing to receive you but Sin after Sin, and thus you rebound from one wickedness to another, till at last you be plunged irrecoverably into that Lake, which burns with Fire and Brimstone: And this is the fourth consideration; discovering the folly and misery of those that go far towards Christianity, and yet fall short.

Fifthly, Though these Professors may hover between Heaven and Earth in their lives, yet they shall not hover between *Heaven and Hell* in their Deaths. No, the half Christian shall be as infallibly and as certainly cast into Hell, as those who were altogether wicked. Here it may be thou

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art neither Godly nor Profane, but hereafter thou must be either saved or damned. There is none (as the Papists Picture *Erasmus*) that hang between Heaven and Hell. Whoever thou art, thou must be either in a State of Nature or of Grace, and accordingly shall thy estate then be for ever, either a state of Salvation among the Saints, or else a state of Damnation with the unregenerate. Though thou art never so lofty and sublime a Professor, yet the same Hell that holds the profane, must eternally hereafter hold thee too, if through thine own wilfull negligence thou stop any where short of true Grace. If the *Almost* Christians could by their glittering Profession gain a cooler Hell, if they could get (I say) but a cooler place in Hell, if their Profession could gain you this, if it could procure you Purgatory for venial Sins, or the moderate punishment which the Papists call *Limbus Patrum*, then you had some shew of Reason to rest where you are, but when the same Hell, and the same everlasting Fire must be the Portion of these, who have proceeded so far (and yet fall short) as well as the portion of the vilest Wretch, whom

whom they have now as far exceeded in goodness, as the holiest Saint alive exceeds them; it is the very height of folly and madness to sit down any where short of true Grace, unless they are fully resolved to sit down no where short of Hell.

6thly. and Lastly, Consider, It will be the insupportable aggravation of these Men's just and everlasting condemnation, for them, to lye *grating upon this sad reflection in Hell, that once they were near to Heaven, but lost it through their own wilfull default.* It will be the aggravation, (I say) of these Men's just and everlasting condemnation, to make this doleful and furious reflection upon themselves in Hell, that once they were in a very hopeful State, that they were once near to Heaven, but lost it through their own wilfull default; O when they shall lie in Hell, and from thence give a sad and ghastly look up to the Glory of the Saints in Heaven; O how will it pierce their Souls to think, that they were once near to that blessed Estate, though now there be an infinite and unpassable gulph between them and

that blessed *Inheritance*, which the Saints enjoy in Heaven! Thus will they reflect upon themselves, though now there be an unpassable gulph between me and Heaven, yet once there was but a step or two that parted us: Had I mortified but one lust more, had I opposed one temptation more, had I put up but one fervent Prayer more; possibly I might now have been in Heaven: But, O my cursed, cursed folly, when I was at the very Gate and Threshold of Heaven, that even then I should stop, and after the relinquishment of my Lusts, and after all my Progress in the ways of Holiness, to return again to the commission of those Sins, in which I had formerly lived, when I had already gone through the hardest and most difficult part of Religion, then to break off my course! What is this but procuring for my self this damnation, which I now suffer, and must suffer for ever? O that Light, that once I enjoyed how it thickens this everlasting darkness! O those tastes I once had of the Powers of the World to come, and relished so much sweetness in, how do they now imbitter this Cup of fury, and trembling that I must for ever drink of! O those Heavenly Gifts that
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once I had, do but now increase these Hellish torments, and the sight of Heaven which I have had, now discovers to me what I have lost ; nay, what I have willfully thrown away through mine own sloth and negligence. O how strange is mine Apostacy ! after I had gone so great a way towards Christianity, rather than I would move one step further, I chose to lie here in this Hell for ever burning and consuming ? Oh what sad and tormenting thoughts will these be ! how will they fret and gnaw the Souls of those Wretches, with Eternal anguish and insupportable Torments ? Thus you have seen in these Particulars somewhat discovered to you of the desperate folly and madness, (and misery also) that Men are guilty of that do proceed so far as to be *Almost*, and yet will not be perswaded to be *Altogether Christians*.

A Blow at Profaneness, taken out of Bishop Hopkins's Exposition of the Ten Commandments.

Profaneſs, is the ſlighting and neglecting of things Holy and Sacred. Whoſoever is guilty of this, let his outward Demeanor in the World, be as fair, and as plauſible as *Morality* and *Hypocriſie* can adorn it, yet he is a profane Perſon.

The Spiritual Sacred things, are,

First, *God in his Nature and Eſſence*. Whom we profane when we entertain any blaſphemous or unworthy Thoughts of Him.

Secondly, *God in his Name*. Which we profane, when we raſhly in our trivial Diſcourſes, boult out that great and terrible Name, at which all the Powers of Heaven and Hell tremble. It doth ſadly fore-bode the growing Profaneſs of the next Age, that Children be Taught or Suffered to call upon God in their Play, before they be taught to call on him in their Prayers.

Thirdly, *God in his Attributes*. Which we profane, when our Affections or Actions are oppoſite or unſuitable. e.g. Our *Unbolineſs* profaneth his *Holineſs*. Our *Deſpondence* profaneth his *Omnipoſence*. Our *Hypocriſie* profaneth his *Omnſcience*. Our *De'pair* profaneth his *Mercy*. Our *Preſumption* profaneth his *Juſtice*. Our *ſinful Policy* profaneth his *Wiſdom*. Our *Security* notwithstanding his Threatnings, and our *Slothfulneſs* notwithstanding his Promiſes, do profane his *Truth*. Every Sin is a kind of *Profaneſs*, a *Contempt of the Excellencies of God*. How much more that which is ſinned for nothing, and deſieth

defieth his Wrath and Justice without a Temptation?

What should tempt the impious Buffoon to deride Religion? Travest the *Holy Scriptures*? And turn whatsoever is *Sacred* and *Venerable* into Burlesque and Drollery? And,

Fourthly, *The Time God hath set apart and consecrated for his Service.* Unto the holy observance whereof God hath condescended to use three cogent Arguments; viz. 1. His own *Example* in resting on it. 2. The *liberal portion of Time that He hath allowed us* for the Affairs of this present Life. 3. The *Dedication* of this day unto his immediate Service. [*Vid.* p. 207.] But we profane it, when we do not rest from the *common works* of our ordinary Callings. And do not diligently and conscientiously attend upon all God's Ordinances, appointed to be performed on this day. And that whether in *Publick, Private, or Secret.* The Day is not done, when the Church dissolves. *The whole of it is holy to the Lord.* Walks and Visits are not to be the Evening-Work of the Sabbath; but holy and spiritual Conferences. Those who have Families to look after, be best employed, in seeing them spend the vacant time of the Sabbath in Holy Exercises; *sc.* Reading the Scripture, giving an account what Truths they have been taught, joining with them in Praises and Prayer unto God. In all of these, in their Courses and Order, till Night calls for Repose.

Fifthly, *The Ordinances of Jesus Christ.* Which we profane, when we neglect, or are remiss in our attendance upon them.

Some particular Characters of a profane Person here follow.

First, *He is a profane Person that thinks and speaks but slightly of Religion.* Religion, our chiefest Excellency, the Crown of our Beings. But

But have we not many, who *deride Piety*, and *make a scoff of Religion*? Who *take up their Religion by chance*, never examining it; Thinking that any may suffice whatever it be; Secretly despising the holiness and strictness of others; thinking they make more ado to get to Heaven than needs. But indeed, they are not *too precise*; but these are *too profane*, who contemn Religion as unnecessary and superfluous.

Secondly, *He is a profane Person who neglects the Publick Worship of God, when he hath opportunity and ability to attend it.* God's special Presence is in two places, Heaven and the Church.

Thirdly, *He is a profane Person who neglects the performance of religious Duties in private.* Every House ought to be a Temple, dedicated to God. And every Master ought to be a Priest, to offer to God the daily Sacrifice of Prayers and Praises. Such *profane Families* as those which are without them, God ranks with Infidels and Heathens, and devotes them to the same common Destruction. In the Morning Prayer is the Key that opens to us the Treasury of God's Mercies and Blessings. In the Evening, it is the Key that shuts us up safe under his Protection and Safe-guard. Excuses are vain, and cannot take off your Obligation.

Are you ignorant? Many are the helps that God hath provided you. Are you *incumbred with your Worldly Affairs*? The weightier they are, the more need you have to ask Counsel and Direction of God. Are you *bashful and modest*? Alas, be ashamed to sin, be ashamed to talk loosely, be ashamed to neglect thy Duty before thy Family; but be not ashamed to pray, and do thy Duty. Our Saviour hath told us, *Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful Genera-*

tion, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh in the Glory of his Father, with the Holy Angels, Mark 8. 38. What will become of them who are ashamed of their Duty?

Fourthly, *He is a profane Person that performs Holy Duties slightly and superficially.* Our whole Hearts must go into our Holy Duties. And the strength and vigor of our Spirits must diffuse themselves into every part of them, to animate and quicken them.

Sacrifices of old, were commanded to be offered up with *Fire*. And *no other Fire* could sanctifie them but that which shot it self down from Heaven. The which was ever after to be kept burning for that use. Our Christian Sacrifices of Praise and Prayer must be offered with *Fire*; and that Fire must be darted down from Heaven. The Celestial Flame of Zeal and Love, which comes from Heaven, and hath a natural Tendency to carry up our Hearts and Souls thither. But indeed commonly our Duties are either offered up with *strange, unhallowed Fire*; some unruly Passion of Hatred, Self-love, and Pride: Or else they are very *cold and heartless*. Our Prayers are dull and yawning, and drop over our Lips without any Spirit or Life in them.

Fifthly, *He is a profane Person that performs Holy Duties for Worldly Ends and Advantages.* For what greater contempt of God can there be than to make his service truckle under base Designs? A Hypocrite is the most profane Wretch that lives. He entitles the Holy God unto the Wickedness he commits, and makes God the Patron of his Sin. And the Wound that Religion receives from Hypocrites, is far more dangerous than that which open Sinners inflict upon it. When he that speaks *Scripture*, lives *Devi-*
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lism, this tempts Men to think that all Religion is but Mockery.

Sixthly, *He is a profane Person who makes what God hath sanctified, common and unballowed.* And have we not many such profane Persons? Many that abuse the Holy and Reverend Name of God about *frivolous* Matters? Who make mention of him in their *idle Chat*, but are mute and dumb when any thing should be spoke to his Praise? There are but two Ends that can warrant and justify the use of any of God's Names, Titles, and Attributes. And they are, 1. *God's Glory*, and, 2. *The Edification of our selves and others.* God's terrible Name is so full of Glory and Majesty that it should never be uttered, but where the Discourse is serious and weighty. *Those who rend it with Oaths and Blasphemies, ought to be punished by the Judges.* And, *would to God, Laws were put in severe Execution, to cramp the Black Tongues of all such profane Wretches.*

Others fill up their familiar Tattles, with the Name of GOD and LORD, making them to express some *small Wonderment*, and fill up a gap in their Discourses. These, God will not hold guiltless. He holds himself contemned, and will revenge the Dishonour that they do him by it. What! Will you dare to tolt out the great Name of God *without considering* it as a Name to be *sported with*? To be tolt to and fro upon every light and vain Tongue? Whenever we mention it, we ought to *bow our hearts in the deepest prostration* before it; to which all the Powers in Heaven and Earth bow down with most humble Veneration. Canst thou in Duty easily compose thy self to *reverence* the holy and dreadful Name, when thou hast accustomed thy self to name him *without any respect* in thy common Discourses? Let
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ine beseech you, O *Christians*, as you tender his Glory, of which He is jealous, whensoever you speak of God, or but mention his Name, do it with an holy Awe and Dread of his Divine Majesty. And you, who are *Masters of Families*, and have Children, beware that you stop in them the growing Sin of profaning God's Name: To attest any thing *by their Faith, or by their Truth*, is a wicked Oath; more impious in effect, than louder ones. The By-word *Marry*, is no less than swearing by the Virgin *Mary*. It is a notable Device of the Devil to bring foolish masked words into common use. 1. That they may swear who use them, though they know it not. And, 2. That by using unknown Oaths, they may be brought in time to take up known ones. *Vehement Affeверations*, be also dangerous beginnings of Oaths. By the customary use of them, we shall insensibly be tripping upon an Oath. [This, and more, see p. 163. and up and down on the third Commandment.] To return, Many profane God's *Sabbaths*, invade impiously the Time that he hath set apart for himself, his own Worship and Service. Many make *the Bible their Jest-Book*; prostituting those Expressions which God hath sanctified to convey to us the knowledge of Himself, and of Eternal Life, unto the Laughter and Mirth of their loose Companions. Those very words which the *Holy Ghost* inspired for the *Edification* of the Church, the *Devil* inspires into these profane Wretches for their *own Damnation*, and the Damnation of those that have pleasure in such horrid Profaneness.

Seventhly, He is a profane Person, who despises his *Spiritual Privileges and Enjoyments*. Upon this very account, the Scripture sets a black and indelible Brand upon *Esau*, *Lest there be any Fornicator, or*
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profane Person; as Esau, who for one morsel of Meat sold his Birthright, Heb. 12. 16. They are profane, who vilifie the Ministry in Themselves and in Others. Who dishonour God's Ambassadors. And who despise his Children, whom God so highly honours as to adopt them into his Family. He who despiseth him that is begotten, despiseth him likewise that begetteth. Contempt of Children and Servants, argues secret contempt of the Master and Father.

Now lay these things to your own Hearts, and bring them home to your own Consciences, and see whether you are in none of these particulars guilty of Profaneness.

Do none of you *think slightly of Religion*, accounting it a politick Design, or a needless Preciseness?

Are none of you *negligent in the Publick Worship of God*? Nor in *Private and Family-Duties*? Or, if you perform them, *is it not very carelessly and perfunctorily*? Or, if you seem zealous in them, *is not your Zeal excited by some Temporal Advantages and Worldly Designs*? Do you not *make that Common and Unholy, which God hath made Holy*? Either, by abusing his Name, polluting his *Sabbaths*, or vilifying his *Word* in your ordinary Raillery?

Lastly, Do none of you *despise Spiritual Privileges, and the Persons who are invested with them*? If you do, *how fair soever your Lives and Actions may be*; although you may think the *rude debauched Sinner* at a vast distance from your selves, and account him the only profane Person; yet certainly *this black stile belongs as properly to you*. And you are profane Violaters of the First Commandment; Which requires you to take the Lord for your God, and accordingly to honour and reverence Him, and whatsoever appertains unto Him.